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MRS. LORD'S MOONSTONE

A SUMMER ROMANCE.

BY

CHARLES STOKES WAYNE

WYNNE & WAYNE,
28 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET,
PHILADELPHIA.

MRS. LORD'S

MOONSTONE

AND

OTHER STORIES

BY

CHARLES STOKES WAYNE

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To G. W. B.

In appreciative acknowledgement of his unfailing kindness, this book is dedicated by the Author.

IN PREPARATION:

A SON OF SATAN,

A STORY OF SOCIETY.

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MRS. LORD'S MOONSTONE.

I.

IT COMES HOME.

Mr. John Lord belonged to that class of men generically described as matter-of-fact. There certainly was very little poetry or sentiment about him. He called a spade a spade, and a shovel a shovel, and he was never known under any circumstances to confound the one with the other. Once having made up his mind on a subject he was not to be moved by argument. He was clear in his convictions and firm in his beliefs, and he had little sympathy or patience with those whose views did not coincide with his own. Such being the case he considered people who believed in the materialization of spirits, clairvoyance, theosophy, or any other of the occult sciences fit subjects for Bloomingdale. It was, therefore, a matter of no little surprise when Mr. Lord, at the age of forty, married a wife as unlike himself as two persons of the same nationality could possibly well be. She

was eighteen years his junior. She was as graceful as a sylph, as fair as a *houri*, and as full of odd fancies and chimerical ideas as the most fantastical of poets. It was the first and only sign he had ever shown that he had anything in common with those who were not given up wholly to the realities and common-places of life. What he ever could have seen in Marian Vallance was a puzzle to his cronies, which well-nigh cost him their esteem. But that he really loved the girl was beyond question. No better proof was required than that he overlooked her vagaries and smiled good-naturedly and without the least shadow of reproof when she indulged in some of her wildest flights of fancy.

Mr. Lord was a man of means. He had enough to do in looking after his real estate, collecting his rents, and clipping his coupons to keep him busy a good part of the time; and, being as fond of leisure as the average man of his years, the rest of his days he spent in idleness or in the indulgence of a taste which, with him, had grown to be little short of a mania,—the collecting of geological specimens. Geology was his hobby, and, if at times he seemed to neglect his wife, it was that he might explore this or that belt of country in which he felt sure he should find something of scientific importance.

Mr. Lord, though well enough off in this world's

goods, was above all an economical man, and he seldom spent a dollar without seeing in return something with more than mere beauty to recommend it. Very rarely, indeed, did he buy ornaments for his home or jewelry for his wife; and it was, therefore, a red-letter day in the old-fashioned house in West Washington Place when its master presented to its mistress a finger-ring that was worth five hundred dollars if it was worth a penny.

The presentation occurred on a warm, sunny afternoon in late June. Mr. Lord had been down town since ten o'clock, and Mrs. Lord was not expecting him until six. She had been lying down, as was her wont after luncheon, and was dressed in a cool, white gown that fitted loosely and comfortably her lithe young figure. She could but admit to herself, as she surveyed her reflection in the mirror over her dressing-table, that she was something more than attractive. Her cheeks were flushed from her recent sleep, and her light, fluffy, golden hair was in the most becoming disorder.

"Yes," she said aloud, "Mrs. Lord, you are very beautiful, and your husband ought to be proud of you."

As she spoke she became aware that a face was peering in at her from between the curtains that

separated her bed-chamber from her boudoir, and at the same time she heard a cheery, voice which said:

"And, Mrs. Lord, permit me to add, your husband *is* proud of you."

The face, which was full and rather florid, which wore a sandy mustache, already streaked with gray, and which ended at the top in a shining crown, bordered on either side by scant, brown locks, was followed into the room by a rather stout body and a round and not very long pair of legs, —the face, body, and legs being comprised in the person of none other than Mr. John Lord, himself.

Mrs. Lord turned towards him with a smile. Though unexpected, his return was none the less welcome, as was attested by a resounding kiss which she administered upon his left cheek.

"You dear old fraud," she exclaimed, "What on earth brought you home at this hour?"

"Try to guess," he said, as he threw himself into a hospitable-looking wicker chair, and pulled his little wife down upon his knee. "See if she can fathom the mystery."

"You are not ill?"—with some show of alarm —"It is not a sunstroke?"

Mr. Lord laughed.

"No, my dear," he replied, "I am not ill; and

though a stroke it was, it was not a sunstroke. It was a much luckier stroke. In a word, for the first, last, and only time in my life, I have taken a flyer, as they call it, in the stock market. I have come out a winner, I have bought for you the prettiest gem you ever saw; I have it in my vest pocket, and here I am."

Mrs. Lord kissed her husband again. This time on the right cheek, because it was the most convenient, and then with nimble fingers she went searching for the vest pocket in which reposed her present.

"Judkins," Mr. Lord went on, "you know Judkins—the fellow who rents my South Broadway store—well Judkins is an inveterate speculator, and when I dropped in on him this morning, he had a dead sure point on Jersey Central: it would advance at least three per cent. before closing hour. He was almost willing to guarantee it, and he implored me to buy two or three hundred shares, just for luck."

Mrs. Lord had found a little pink-wrapped square parcel and was busy removing the rubber bands and the paper.

"Well," her husband went on, "much as I despise this stock gambling, I consented, and took a hundred shares, and, sure enough, I had no sooner bought than up went Jersey Central

like a rocket. Up, up, up, leading the entire market and creating such an excitement on the street as has not been known for an age."

"Where under the canopy did you get it?" Mrs. Lord exclaimed at this juncture, having brought to view a ring of the most exquisite workmanship, "it's just too lovely for anything, and you're the dearest, best old husband that ever married a foolish little wife!"

Mr. Lord smiled happily as he watched her eyes twinkle and her whole face glow with the delight that is seen on the face of a child that is given a new toy.

"I saw it first several months ago in a curious old jewelry shop down Maiden Lane," he answered, as Mrs. Lord placed it upon her pretty taper finger and held it out into the shaft of sunshine that stole between the closed blinds. The diamonds blazed but the central gem gave out a soft, translucent light that seemed cool and refreshing amid the glow and glitter of its surroundings. "I was pleased with it then, and I meant to buy it for you, but I did not feel that I could exactly afford it. Jewelry, you know, my dear, is not much in my line; but the moonstone in this ring is one of the finest I have ever seen—it seems to be the half of a perfect sphere —and I must say I rather fancied it."

"And is it a moonstone?" Mrs. Lord asked, bringing it closer to her, and examining it carefully, "O I am so awfully glad; they say they bring good luck to the owner."

Mr. Lord smiled good-naturedly and fondly patted his wife on the back.

"I'm sure I don't see what luck as you call it there can be in a piece of feldspar or adularia," he said.

"O, but there is," Mrs. Lord answered with great gravity and an air that was meant to be impressive; "to be sure there is. Why a four-leaf clover is nothing but grass you know, but then it's lucky, and I can prove it—the Summer before I met you I found three four-leaf clovers in one day."

II.

ITS GENII MATERIALIZES.

THE following month Mr. and Mrs. Lord went to the seaside. Not to a fashionable Summer resort where to eclipse one another in the number and gorgeousness of their costumes is the chief ambition of the women, and the discussion of various brands of champagne in the hotel wine-room, the principal, if not the sole, occupation of the men; but to the most arcadian of places to be found on the coast: a spot unknown to the masses, combining all the advantages of sea air and all the benefits of pine forests. Here were to be had on one hand the ceaseless roar of the ocean, the fathomless reach of dazzling blue sea, the attendant long stretch of sandy beach; and on the other, not a stone's-throw away, the country village street with its quaint and cosey little vine-covered cottages setting back behind gardens rich in homely flowers; the tall old trees that had stood for centuries and that now stretched thick, shady branches over the cool gray roadway; and the river, glinting brightly in the summer sunshine as it

flowed peacefully between pebbly banks, from which rose huge bluffs capped with pines and cedars that formed a dark green border against the bright blue of the sky.

At the top of one of these bluffs, somewhat less steep than the rest, nestling in a little grove of giants and overhung by ailanthus trees whose bright red blossoms tapped on its window panes and made a fringe along its eaves, stood a low, long, rambling, white-washed house. The porch was almost level with the driveway which skirted the door and over which the chickens roamed with unchecked rural freedom and the children of mine host gamboled bare-footed and brown-legged "from dawn to dewy eve." Cushions and easy chairs scattered about the porch in homely disorder, told that it was a favorite lounging place, and told the truth. Rarely did it happen at any hour that the porch at Custis's was free from loungers. Some of the boarders lounged there most of the day. Those who bathed lounged there when they were not bathing; those who sailed lounged when they were not sailing, and those who played tennis lounged when they were not playing. Sometimes the loungers had a rubber at whist, sometimes they read light novels ,and sometimes they gossiped, told ghost stories or guessed riddles. The people

at Custis's led an easy life; there was no denying that, and it was for this reason that Mr. and Mrs. Lord preferred Custis's to any of the summer resorts in the country. Mrs. Lord wore a blue flannel dress day in and day out, and Mr. Lord went about in corduroy knickerbockers, a brown flannel shirt and brown woolen stockings. When the mosquitoes came, as they sometimes did, Mr. Lord wore canvas leggings, and when they became unbearable, as very soon was the case so far as he was concerned, he packed his hand-satchel and departed on a geologizing tour.

It was well on towards the end of July that the leggings having failed succesfully to ward off the assaults of the "little beggars" as he was wont to call them, Mr. Lord, as usual, bade his wife an affectionate farewell, and started for a trip to the green hills of Vermont, in search of a peculiar granite formation which he had read in the *Scientific American* had recently been discovered in that locality in small quantities. Mrs. Lord had been asked to go, but she had declined. The mosquitoes did not trouble her, she said, and she preferred to remain where she was to roaming about the country after pieces of ugly, uninteresting rock and stone. To tell the truth, Mrs. Lord, at that time, was a good deal more interested in her new ring than she would

have cared for her husband to know, and what she most longed for, was an opportunity to test what seemed to her a peculiar charm or power possessed by the moonstone which was its central gem. The more closely she examined the ring, the more beautiful she discovered it to be. Aside from the rare brilliancy of the diamonds and the soft, pellucid light of the moonstone itself, the gold setting was a most superb bit of delicate chasing. It was covered with intricate tracery, forming arabesques of oriental design and combining Arabic or Moorish characters, which, she felt sure, could she only translate them, would tell her a romantic story of the trinket's origin. That it had once belonged to an East Indian prince she was quite satisfied, and in her romantic soul, she imagined a thousand and one legends in which the ring and its original owner, whom she pictured as a tall, handsome, dark-eyed, swarthy-skinned Arab, figured most prominently.

Time and again, after placing it upon her finger on that bright sunny afternoon, somewhat over a month ago, she had gazed upon the opalescent beam that the moonstone gave forth and that seemed to follow her eye, no matter where she looked, and the beam had spread as she gazed upon it until it had changed into a great shaft of pearly light, and she had seemed to

be looking down a long avenue, at the end of which were marble palaces with beautiful mosaic floors; great mosques with gilded domes; and many fountains throwing up sparkling jets of water that fell splashing back into wide stone basins, amid palm trees under which sat veiled women and olive-hued men, clad in garments of rare tints, richly embroidered, and wearing red caps with blue tassels or white turbans, such as she had seen in photographs and paintings of Eastern street scenes.

Repeatedly, however, the pictures had been shattered. Mr. Lord, coming upon her while she was in the midst of her reverie, had invariably, merely by means of some prosaic remark, wrecked the palaces, caused the mosques to totter and crumble, and swept away the fountains, the trees and the people, as though the breath of a sirocco from the desert had laid waste the city and destroyed its inhabitants. Now that Mr. Lord was gone, Mrs. Lord determined that she would see this vision to the end. What it all meant she could not understand. At first, she fancied it was her imagination, which no one knew better than herself, was most lively; but, having seen the same pictures repeatedly in the month since the ring was hers, she at length dismissed this supposition from her mind and

reasoned calmly with herself that it was something more. In a word, that realism and phantasy were linked together, but how or where or why she could not comprehend.

Dinner was over at Custis's and a large party of the boarders having taken passage in Captain Custis's big sail boat were being carried by a stiff breeze down the river. Of those who remained behind, one had gone off to do some photographing with a tiny camera which was his hobby; a couple had strolled away in search of a sequestered nook where she could read poetry and he could smoke his pipe and listen at the same time, and the rest, with the single exception of Mrs. Lord, had gone to their rooms for an afternoon nap. Mrs. Lord, who had been bathing in the river in the morning and whose hair was still far from dry, took a chair out on the lawn, and, with a towel over her shoulders and her "wealth of golden tresses" spread out so that the sun could exercise its drying powers upon it, made herself as comfortable as possible. There were many white-winged skiffs on the river and for a time she sat watching them. At length, however, she became aware that the shaft of light issuing from the moonstone of her ring was seemingly endeavoring to draw her eyes upon it, and she certainly was in no humor to

resist its wooing influence. She turned her hand in her lap so that the gem was in full view, and she permitted her gaze unchecked, to rest upon the little gleam that issued from its depths. Slowly the gleam grew wider; the light, at first soft and cold as a moon-beam, grew brighter and brighter, until the sunlight paled beside it, and the surroundings faded away as in a mist, while, in their stead, came once again, the long avenue she had so often seen.

At the end of the avenue this time, however, she no longer saw the open street, but what appeared to be a sort of patio or garden with high walls, where grew orange trees from which the luscious, golden fruit depended, and jasmine trees, whereon grew a wealth of white and yellow flowers, the odor of which seemed wafted to her senses up this long avenue of light. The floor of the court was marble, beautifully inlaid, and here and there were superb specimens of Moorish filigree work and Arab decorations full of rich color. Standing in the patio, adding wonderfully to the picturesqueness of the scene, she saw a youth, slender and supple, wearing an embroidered jacket and the full baggy trousers of the Arab. And yet he was not dark enough for an Arab, she thought. His complexion was much fairer than that of any Arab she had ever

dreamed of, and moreover his eyes were gray, and his hair and mustache a pronounced blonde. As she looked at him, his face, which was at first quite sad, appeared to brighten; it seemed to her that he must have caught a glimpse of her at the other end of the long avenue, for he was stretching out his arms towards her and making signs as if he wished her to understand something he was trying to communicate. Though she could see him quite plainly, he appeared a very long way off; and, though his mouth moved as if in speech, not a sound reached her. It was like gazing out through a telescope at a far distant world, only one little speck of which was visible, and that little speck magnified a thousand times. Even as she gazed she wondered. She realized the phenomenal strangeness of it all, just as one wonders in a dream sometimes and thinks of the nonsense and absurdity of the experience through which one is passing. As she wondered she became aware that the being,—man, spirit, myth or whatever it might be—at which she was gazing, was moving. He seemed to be coming towards her. Yes, there was no doubt of it. He was running now, the lightly tinted burnous which he wore fluttering behind him in the breeze made by his own swift passage. He was speeding on up the

long vista of light with an easy, graceful lope that filled Mrs. Lord with admiration and made her heart beat nervously. She was not altogether pleased, nevertheless. A sense that she was doing what she ought not to do, that she was committing an impropriety, if not a sin, in thus trifling with what impressed her as being the supernatural, pervaded her for the time, and again and again she tried to turn away from the scene and banish it from her view; but, try as she would, she could not. Her eyes were fast riveted upon the youth who was as handsome as any man she had ever dreamed of in the days before she met John Lord, and had determined to be an old man's darling rather than run the risk of being a young man's slave. Nearer and nearer he came with a speed that was superhuman, and, as he approached her the burnous, the embroidered jacket, and the baggy Arab trousers faded away as in a picture projected by a steroptican, changing into garments of a higher civilization.

Slowly the light that had surrounded him, the glare that had hidden every thing else from her view, grew less brilliant. She strained her eyes to catch a glimpse of familiar objects; her temples were throbbing painfully; she felt the blood come and go in her cheeks, and then—she doubled up her hand, the ring was hidden from

sight, and the river, the trees, the sunlight, the white-winged skiffs came back with a suddenness that was nothing short of startling. But they did not come alone. There were voices with them. The party that had gone down the river with Captain Custis had returned, and it had brought back a new boarder. Mrs. Lord caught sight of him the moment she raised her eyes. To her he was not quite a stranger, and, from the look he gave her, as he passed up the walk towards the house from the steps leading from the landing, it was evident that she also had been recognized by him. It was the Arab of her vision.

III.

IT IS LOCKED IN A JEWEL CASE.

Romantic as she was Mrs. Lord was not altogether pleased by her experience of the afternoon. She was not a little shaken up, and at the same time considerably mystified and nonplussed. If her former experiences while wearing the moonstone and gazing into its depths had been strange, this last one had certainly been more so, and her first impulse, on reaching her room, was to take the gem from her finger and lock it up in her jewel case. Having acted in accordance with the dictates of her will in this instance, as she was generally wont to do, she threw herself upon her bed, and, burying her face in the not over-soft pillow fell to weeping. They were not tears of grief which she shed, but hysterical tears that flowed at the bidding of her over-wrought nerves. The tension which had been sustained for hours had relaxed and she sobbed and wept as a natural consequence of the relaxation. Carefully to take into consideration all that she had gone through since dinner, and to argue it all out

in an unprejudiced and matter-of-fact way, was, with her, a sheer impossibility.

That she might have fallen asleep, and dreamed, never once entered her mind, or if it did, it was speedily dismissed as unworthy a moment's serious thought. To her, the idea that the ring, like Aladdin's lamp, had its genii, was by no means so miraculous as not to be credited. On the other hand, she was quite willing to believe it, and believe it she did. The only question which arose was as to what manner of man this genii was. She feared that, having invoked his presence, no matter how unwittingly, he might prove a Frankenstein and wreak upon her some terrible vengeance—inflict upon her some awful retribution. She pictured him to herself in all moods. Now, he was kind and gentle, answering her every bidding as a humble but powerful slave and ally; again, he was fondly affectionate, and again passionately loving. She thought of the embarassing position in which she would be placed, should the latter dream prove a reality, and while the romantic element in her nature rather welcomed than repelled the thoughts of such an episode, still, she would not admit herself other than a true and loyal wife, and would not, for even so long as a heart-beat, recognize the possibility of encouraging such a course on the

part of her genii, no matter how earnestly or persistently he should woo. A brave and determined rejection of his advances, she argued, might bring down upon her his wrath, and she trembled at the thought of what the result would be. The time when her husband should return and find this creature; the time when he should become aware, as sooner or later he must, of the nature of the bond or relationship existing between it and his wife, also came up before her in her train of thought, and the subject was far more annoying and peace-disturbing than the mere possibilities which had preceded it, because this was an event which seemed to her unavoidable.

She was thus deep in the contemplation of an apparent inevitability, when she was rather rudely aroused from her reverie by the clanging of the supper bell, which was being vigorously rung from the porch just beneath her window. Springing hastily up, she glanced in the mirror over her dressing table. It was a glass which, fiend-like, invariably persisted in distorting her pretty features out of all semblance to their natural regularity and beauty. On this occasion, it was even more successful than usual in impressing the lady that she was neither a Hebe nor a Psyche. She saw a pair of very red eyelids and a nose that wore a deeper tint of pink than the sun and

wind had ever combined to give it, though they had been making repeated attacks upon it almost daily since she arrived at Custis's.

"I am a fright," she said, as she turned her head from side to side and surveyed her face at various angles, "and I've half a notion to send down word I have a headache, and will take some tea and toast in my room."

At this instant a faint odor of something frying came to her through the opened window, wafted thither from the kitchen, and she remembered having seen that morning one of the barefooted and brown-legged sons of the house of Custis lugging home a basket overflowing with soft crabs, fresh from the river. That whiff decided her. She suddenly became aware that she was possessed of an appetite that tea and toast would not satisfy, and she was inclined to laugh at the thought that she had entertained the notion of so frugal a supper for even so short a moment.

"One thing is certain," she said to herself, "the genii has not robbed me of my desire for food."

It was nevertheless with some trepidation that Mrs. Lord at length descended to the wide, but low-ceiled dining room. She had bathed her face in cooling and delicately perfumed toilet water

in the effort to remove all traces of her recent tears, she had brushed out and recoiled her long, golden hair, she had donned a most becoming knitted skull cap of blue aud white, and she had twisted a silk handkerchief of the same colors about the neck of her flannel boating costume.

There was something seemingly coquettish in these preparations, and yet she would not have admitted, even to herself, that she was doing anything more than usual, or than she would have done had "her genii,"as she was now pleased to call the new boarder, not so strangely arrived.

She stopped in the hall, at the foot of the stairs, before going into the room where the lively rattle of knives and forks against ironstone china told full well that the household was already engaged in that unpoetical, yet important, occupation—eating. The register—for primitive as Custis's was in some of its appointments, it was not behind in this respect—lay open upon a bracket-supported desk, and it was to glance at the last name on the exposed page, that Mrs. Lord halted.

The writing was large and heavy, showing signs of both self-complacency and will, while the upward tendency of the words would have suggested to the student of graphology, that the writer was as ambitious as he was egotistical. It is doubtful whether Mrs. Lord attempted to read this subtle

message which the signature bore with it, or, indeed, whether her knowledge of the subject was sufficient to do so, even had she made the attempt. What she did read was this:

BEN HAMED, TUNIS,

and it told her that her genii not only had a local habitation and a name, but could write in good English characters, if it told her nothing more.

Among the many who were in the dining-room when she entered, her eyes very promptly sought out the Tunisian, who, she found, had been given a place half way down the table at which she was in the habit of sitting, and on the opposite side from her. It thus happened that she had an excellent opportunity of critically inspecting him, and, though she was by no means free from nervousness and a certain ill-defined superstitious dread, the fact that both he and she were in the midst of so many living, moving, flesh-and-blood people, took away, in a measure, the romantic and supernatural halo with which she had been inclined to surround him.

Looking at him in this light, she could but admit to herself that he was not all that he had at first seemed. Robbed of the glare and glamour of oriental surroundings, and the magnifying power of the curious gem which now lay safely in the

bottom of her jewel-box up-stairs, Ben Hamed was nothing more than a thin, sallow-complexioned and rather slovenly-attired Arab. He ate with his knife and he made an unpleasant noise with his mouth as he hurriedly chewed his food. There was certainly very little about him that was in anyway attractive, and Mrs. Lord began to wonder how she could have imagined for a moment that he was either handsome or graceful. On the other hand, the more she looked at him the more she disliked him, and, with the dislike, came an increase of nervousness which was further augmented when the young man, having finished his meal, instead of leaving the table, sat still in his place, staring steadily and stolidly at her from beneath his droopy, dreamy eyelids. Her own eyes dropped under his gaze, and for a few minutes she scarcely knew what was going on about her. Then she heard him uttering a mumbled expression of disappointment or disapprobation, she was not quite sure which, and the next moment he had pushed back his chair and departed.

Sitting next to Mrs. Lord was a certain Miss Shandon—a woman elderly enough to equivocate about her age, and young enough to imagine that the equivocation would not be suspected. She had numerous affected kittenish ways that did much to hinder a deception that they

were meant to further, and she dressed in costumes as unbecoming as was her behavior. She had been watching the Arab very closely and she had noticed how he, in turn, had riveted his languorous look upon the pretty Mrs. Lord. She had noticed it with a good deal of envy, and she was accordingly more than pleased when she heard that echo of his heart's disapproval which seemed involuntarily to escape him as he rose to go.

"The horrid man!" she exclaimed, though a pleased smile quite out of keeping with her words played over her unattractive features as she spoke, "Why it was simply disgusting. He stared you clear out of countenance, Mrs. Lord, and it was not a complimentary stare, either."

Mrs. Lord was too much embarrassed at the moment to make reply. She was aware that everybody was talking, and she was half conscious that she was as much a subject of the conversation as the Arab. Moreover she was painfully impressed with the notion that she was blushing and that her embarrassment must be palpable to everyone. At one moment she was tempted to beat a retreat to her room, but she was not certain whether, in her present state, her legs would bear her, and she accordingly remained where she was.

When, at length, she recovered in a measure her self-composure she found the dining-room quite

empty with the exception of herself and Captain Custis's eldest daughter Juanita, who was standing at the end of the table looking at her.

"Oh Neetie!" she exclaimed in some dismay, "What *have* I been doing?"

Neetie smiled pleasantly and reassuringly.

"Nothing," she replied, "you seemed rather thoughtful, that was all; and you see you have eaten scarcely anything. Shall I get you some hot crabs?"

"No, thanks," Mrs. Lord answered, and she looked at her plate to find that Neetie had not exaggerated the truth. Her appetite, ravenous as it had been half an hour before, had left her, and even the thought of food was now distasteful.

"Tell me about him, Neetie," she went on, pointing to Ben Hamed's empty chair, "that man who sat there! Where did he come from? Is he acquainted here?"

"I'm sure I know very little of him," returned the girl, speaking with a care for grammatical construction that indicated in a measure her fitness for the position of "school marm" in the village —a position in which she served eight months of the twelve. "He came this afternoon without any previous announcement, and he told us that he had been recommended here by a gentleman in New York, whose name he had forgotten."

"Has he come to stop any time?" Mrs. Lord asked, and there was still a degree of nervousness in her voice.

"I don't know," Nettie replied, and then, as if the thought had just come to her, she exclaimed, "Oh I must tell you the strangest thing: His trunk—the oddest looking box you ever saw, like a big square tea chest, bound with bronze bands and figured in the queerest fashion imaginable, came here nobody knows how. Father says he didn't bring it up in the boat; none of the boys brought it; there hasn't been a wagon up to the house to-day, and yet when I took him up to his room,—which is directly over yours,—there was this box standing in one corner. I'm sure, I can't account for it, can you?

Mrs. Lord did not attempt to account for it. She was worried, distressed, and annoyed, and she lost no time after this in going to her room. She had an acute dread of again coming face to face with Ben Hamed, and she preferred the seclusion of her own chamber and its little flickering candle to a seat on the porch down stairs with the possibility, if not indeed the probability, of the strange Arab for a companion.

After half an hour's serious thought she got out her writing materials and penned a letter to her husband. To tell him all that had happened

would, she knew, be just so much labor thrown away. What she desired now above all else was to have him by her side. His presence would give her confidence and his practical philosophy would do much, she felt sure, towards driving away these fantastic and romantic unrealities that seemed to be weaving their web about her.

"Some strange things have happened since you left," she wrote, "and I want to consult you. Do not think, dear, that this a trivial matter; it is not. It concerns your happiness and mine, and the sooner you come, the better it will be for us both." And, having added her love and her kisses, and signed it with the pet name by which her husband loved to call her, she wrote the inevitable postscript:

"P. S.—The mosquitoes have gone—a North-east wind has driven every one of them back to the woods."

IV.

ITS GENII EXERCISES HIS POWERS.

THE days directly following the sending of the letter to Mr. Lord were anything but pleasant ones for his wife. She spent much of her time in her room, and only ventured out of doors when she knew that the Arab, who remained a guest in house, had gone sailing on the river, had started for a pilgrimage to the beach, or had otherwise betaken himself well out of sight and hearing. By an arrangement with Neetie she managed to keep herself posted as to when he took his meals, and thus avoided meeting him on the narrow stairway or in the passage. Her precautions in this respect were, as might be expected, not unnoted by the other boarders, and they furnished them with a fertile and ever-available topic for gossip.

Meanwhile Ben Hamed went about with eyes cast down and a generally woe-begone expression on his sallow-features. There was disappointment in his very attitude as he sat on the lawn for hours at a stretch, now glancing out over the sparkling waters of the river at his feet, now with his gaze

fixed upon his folded hands as if in the deepest meditation; and there was, moreover, an unmistakable restless longing and expectancy in his look, as again and again he scanned the features of each of the boarders, with whom he came in contact. He had not become popular with the other guests at Custis's. Save to Tom Parks, a clever young artist who was stopping at the house, he had had very little to say to any of them, and in spite of their combined efforts to elicit from him some facts as to his previous history, the object of his visit to America, and kindred matters which were distressing their curious minds, he remained taciturn and reticent, sometimes, indeed, treating their advances with undisguised rudeness. Even Miss Shandon, with her assumed ingenuousness, was unable to draw him out or to melt, in the smallest degree, his icy exterior. She made no attempt to conceal her admiration for him, but, unfortunately, he alone of all the people at the resort, was apparently totally unconscious of the high place to which she had been pleased to elevate him in her esteem. To Parks, however, he seemed to take a decided fancy, and he was more than pleased when the artist showed him his highly-colored sketches of cloud effects, and happy combinations of blue waters, bluer skies and deep green foliage. On more than one occasion he accompanied him on

his sketching tours, and watched with interest as he deftly transferred to canvas bits of the picturesque scenery of the neighborhood.

A week had dragged by, and no answer had come to Mrs. Lord's importunate entreaty to her husband to return. Daily she had looked for a letter and daily, she had been disappointed, until at length her disappointment had given place to annoyance not unmingled with resentment, and at the end of seven days she was, as may be imagined, in anything but the most amiable of moods. Owing to her self-imposed hermitage, Custis's had become insufferably dull, and she longed for some excitement to vary the tedious monotony. Her fear of the Arab, which at first was distracting enough in its way, had gradually grown less pronounced, and she was now almost tempted to court an interview rather than to avoid it, though a lingering dread of the consequences still haunted her.

On the morning of the eighth day after the despatch of her letter, having been informed that Ben Hamed and Tom Parks had early departed for a journey in search of the source of the river which flowed by their doors, a matter of seven or eight miles up a tortuous stream, through marshy meadows and overhung by drooping willows, she determined to indulge herself in a walk in di-

rectly the opposite direction; and, immediately after breakfast she repaired to her room in order to make ready for the jaunt. While standing at her bureau an irresistible desire seemed to take possesion of her to look once more at the curious gem which had brought upon her all the vexation and worry of the week just ended, and, almost before she realized what she was doing, she had opened her jewel case, had taken the ring from where she had thrown it on that eventful afternoon, and had slipped it upon her finger. There was surely a strange fascination for her about this bit of antique jewelry, a fascination that bordered upon the supernatural, and, though a tremor of apprehension passed over her as she handled it once more, she seemed utterly unable to combat its myterious influence and she turned it about until the moonstone with its milky white gleam was uppermost. As she did so she heard voices on the lawn below, and a hasty glance from her window told her that Captain Custis was about to set sail for a trip down the river towards the village. For the moment she seemed to forget that the ring was still upon her hand. Her wish to be a passenger in the boat was the absorbing thought, and in a twinkling she had donned a hat and was hurrying down stairs. A moment later she had taken a place beside the Captain in

the stern sheets, while the " Gertrude " had swung away from the pier and was headed under a fair breeze for the channel which rounds the bar a couple of hundred yards below the landing.

The Captain was going to the village for provisions, he said, but he would be pleased to take her to the beach, if she so desired. Mrs. Lord did so desire, and the obliging host of the Custis House accordingly let out his sail and the trim craft cut through the water at a very lively rate. The Captain and his passenger chatted pleasantly as they flew along, and it seemed but a short time indeed before they were passing through the railroad-bridge draw and were steering for the bulkhead at the end of a little inlet that the river's current had cut into the the sandy soil of the ocean's brim. Here the lady disembarked.

Northward and southward stretched the glittering sands, while to the east spread out the vast blue ocean with its border of foaming breakers. Nowhere was there to be seen a single human being. Just around a jutting cliff a view of the bathing pavilion, half a mile away, and of a score or more of people lolling on the beach might have been had, but the immediate landscape was neither marred nor adorned by man. The breeze was from off shore and the rays of the sun, which was

well up in the heavens, beat down fiercely and fervently.

It was a very warm day and this fact became more and more patent to Mrs. Lord as her walk along the sands, away from, rather than towards civilization, continued. Reaching at length a point where some drift-wood from a long-forgotten wreck had piled itself up into a barricade, she sat down on one of the timbers, in the shadow formed by the others, and at once fell into a dreamy mood of deepest thought. Her hands, as usual, lay in her lap, and her gaze, becoming tired of the dazzling blue waters and sky, and the still more dazzling white sand, bent itself upon her entwined fingers. Then it was, for the first time since leaving the house, that she became aware that she was still wearing the fateful ring. As she noted the fact her heart seemed suddenly to stop beating and for an instant to remain pulseless. The next moment the little cold gleam of light from the moonstone's wondrous depths caught and held her glance, and, yielding to its strange, magnetic influence, all dread, fear, apprehension or whatever it may have been which had oppressed her, fled away: dissolved into a misty nothingness and left her with a sense of thorough and complete resignation.

At the same time the light in the ring was growing more brilliant. Slowly it expanded until now,

as on each previous occasion when she had permitted her eyes to rest upon it, it formed a long shining avenue. At first the glare was so great that she could not distinguish the picture which was presented to her at the farther end. By degrees, however, two figures took shape, clear and distinct as on the face of a mirror. In one she recognized the artist Parks, seated before his portable easel, which he had seemingly set up in the most charming of little bosky dells. In his left hand he held his palette and maul stick, while with numerous brushes in his right, he was waving frantically to the other figure to return, and laughing immoderately as he did so. The other figure, which was no less a personage than Ben Hamed, was running away from his companion as fast as his legs would carry him, and he was running with that deliciously agile motion that had so charmed Mrs. Lord when she had first seen him. She also noticed that he was running towards her—coming down the illuminated pathway with a speed that soon left the artist far behind, and in a short time quite out of sight. As he came nearer she saw that his face wore an expression of intense delight. A smile played over his features, and so lighted them up as to make them appear all that she had once dreamed them. He seemed to her more than ever a sort

of Oriental Adonis, and she wondered, even as she looked and admired, how she could ever have thought him plain or, what had been nearer the true color of her thoughts, repulsive,—and why she should have so strenuously striven to avoid him. Once again he seemed to her the ideal of her romantic youth and innocence, and she promised herself that if he should come to her now, as she hoped he might, she would surely make amends for her ill-treatment of him in the past.

Suddenly the runner stopped. He appeared to be standing not ten feet distant from her, but so surrounded was he by the glamour and glare of the moonstone's trascendent brilliancy, as to shut out and eclipse all the natural surroundings and make invisible every object save himself. She saw him raise his eyes and lift his hands as in prayer. His lips moved, as though he would invoke Heavenly aid, and then she heard what she recognized at once as the voice of the Arab.

"Allah be praised!" it said, "Allah, adored by shadows of morn and eve has spun our destiny. Blessed be the name of Allah!"

Mrs. Lord's hand turned spasmodically in her lap. The moonstone was hidden from her sight. The glare of the avenue of light had once more given place to the glare of sea and beach and sky. Ben Hamed in the flesh was standing before her,

Very straight and lithe and graceful he seemed, while his fair skin appeared all aglow with the warm blood that coursed beneath it. Admiration had by now completely routed every less flattering sentiment, and had brought with it the semblance at least, of an absorbing passion. A tiny spark it seemed to Mrs. Lord at first, but she recognized its presence, and, even as she cast an admiring glance at the handsome fellow before her—a glance which involuntarily escaped her, and which she could not have withheld had she been threatened with the direst punishment for such action—her whole being thrilled with the sensibility that the feeblest fanning might cause that spark to burst into a consuming flame. A strange, unaccountable and altogether inconquerable impulse had siezed upon her personality, and seemed to be forcing her with an utter disregard of her still live, though somewhat slumbrous conscience, to say and do that which she but too well knew was at least imprudent if not improper.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked; and as she spoke the very tones of her voice were a surprise to her. There was something unmistakably tender and wooing about them. They seemed to echo the secrets of her inner soul—her holy of holies as it were—and she was amazed

at what she deemed the treachery of her own tongue.

"Ben Hamed is happy," said the Arab in a voice not a whit less passionate, while his languorous gray eyes beamed with a love-light that would have been a signal of danger to the woman had she not been bound body and soul by the weird spell that possessed a force and power more potent than any natural human agency.

"Many suns have come and gone," he went on, as he threw himself on the sand beside the picturesque young wife, his gaze fastened upon the fair face that was still turned delightely towards him. "Many suns have come and gone since the eye of Ben Hamed first rested on the beautiful daughter of the unknown land. Sometimes he grew weary of watching and waiting, but Allah was kind to him. In the end Allah showed him the way, and he followed it."

Under ordinary circumstances the Arab's stilted, third-person style of expression would have excited the risibilities of Mrs. Lord, who was possessed of a keen sense of the ridiculous, and she would, in all probability, have had difficulty in refraining from laughter. As it was, however, it seemed but natural that he should talk in this way, and for the nonce, she was even inclined to follow his example.

"When did Ben Hamed first see the daughter of the unknown land?" she asked, her woman's curiosity asserting itself and riding rough-shod into the very courts of the supernatural and the romantic. Who and what are you? How came you here? What is this strange link, that, buried in the depths of a curious old gem, exerts its weird influence over us both? These questions, and a hundred more, bubbled up in her mind, one after the other, and, though she longed to ask them all in a breath, she bode her time and went deliberately to work. Perhaps, if handled cautiously the Arab would make all plain to her, she thought. At any rate she could try it. It was very pleasant to sit here with him at her feet. There was a charm in his presence that she could not resist. Her being was thrilled by the delicious melody of his voice, even as harp strings thrill and vibrate when swept by the hands of the harper. Time was speeding on unheeded. She was far happier than she could ever remember having been before. Conscience had been lulled to sleep and her duty to her husband and her duty to herself were, for the time, alike gladly forgotten.

"Far away across the rolling seas, beyond all the storm and the tempest of the great ocean," the Oriental continued, as his hands played idly

with the sands, "Ben Hamed lived in fair Tunis. It was his home and he was happy. Dates grew at his threshold, apricots and orange trees hung their luscious golden fruit over the marble paths of his garden. He was rich and powerful. He sent his wares to the North and to the West. He was a merchant and he knew the English tongue, because he had learned of trade and commerce from a son of the North who came to him to take advantage of Tunisian ignorance, and to wring wealth from Tunisian credulousness. Ben Hamed had taken unto him a daughter of Islam. She was beautiful to look upon, but her beauty pales beside the beauty of her Western sister, as the beauty of the night pales beside the beauty of the day. She gave to him a precious ring,—an heirloom she said, which had been in her family for many generations. She was the last of her race, and to him she gave it, because it was the ring that her father had worn, and her brother, as well. It was a man's ring she said, and she had been told it possessed a charm. Unfortunately—ah! too unfortunately for her, alas!" and Ben Hamed sighed as he spoke, while a look of tenderest pity, Mrs. Lord thought, seemed to come into his impassioned up-turned eyes, "Unfortunately, the twin ring, the other half of the mystic moonstone,

mounted in the same manner, surrounded by sentences in hieroglyphics dating back thousands of years, had been lost. It had been worn by the pride of her great-great-grandfather's harem, she said, who, vile woman that she was, forsaking her lord and master, evaded his guard of eunuchs and fled with a sneaking Christian far to the northward."

Mrs. Lord's romantic soul fairly revelled in the revelation that was being made to her. It was so like a wonderful fairy tale or a chapter from the Arabian Nights, that she fancied for a moment that she must be dreaming, and that it was her own imagination that was engaged in filling in the details of a fleeting phantasmagoria. She was tempted to resort to the standard expedient of testing her wakefulness, namely, by pinching, but before she could do so, the Arab had risen to his knees, had seized her hand and was pressing his hot kisses upon it and upon the ring that graced her finger. He seemed to have gone wild with delight at making the discovery.

"It is here," he cried, "it is yours. The charm is made clear at last. It is the work of Allah!" and between each sentence he kissed and re-kissed the moonstone, and the fair hand that wore it.

Mrs. Lord was not a little startled at the turn affairs had taken, but the same strange, passionate

intoxication possessed her and she was not displeased. She submitted unresistingly to the fellow's caresses and permitted him to hold her hand until his excitement had subsided. Then she spoke to him in the same softly-wooing voice that she had used before, and that she could not have changed, she felt sure, even had she so desired.

"And the other?" she asked.

He held up his right hand. Upon its third finger was a ring the exact counterpart of her own. The stone, the manner of setting, the chasing, all were identical. The gems seemed once to have formed one perfect sphere which had been most skilfully halved.

"It is indeed wonderful," she said.

"Allah be praised!" murmured the Arab devoutly.

He was kneeling in the sands with bowed head. Involuntarily Mrs. Lord bent her own head forward. Once more her eyes fell on the ring upon her finger, the moonstone in which seemed to be reflecting all the light of the sun, now in the zenith. Again the illuminated pathway appeared with the Arab kneeling within it. Only for a moment she saw the great glare, and then, slowly it grew dim and indistinct. Ben Hamed's figure gradually faded from view. When she looked up, as she did presently, she was quite alone.

A dense black cloud had swept across the sun's disk, and the wind was blowing cold and raw from the northeast. The ring, which had never fitted her tightly, had slipped from her finger and lay stone downward in her lap.

V.

ITS GENII APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS.

MRS. LORD'S conscience upon regaining its normal condition of sensitiveness smote her unmercifully. Her performance of the morning she now saw in its true light and she could not help admitting that she had committed an egregious error. Mr. Lord had doubtless never received her letter, and to have taken revenge for a seeming slight, that probably after all was entirely unintentional, was, she now unsparingly told herself, not only cruelly unkind but absolutely despicable. That her meeting with Ben Hamed was accidental, she would not believe for one moment. She was angry with herself, and she had made up her mind to accept no loophole of escape. She freely acknowledged that a powerful impulse had seemed to urge her on, but she also held that her duty was to have struggled against it, and to have overcome it. She ought not even to have looked at the ring, knowing, as she did, its dangerous character, much less have been so weak as to slip it upon her finger. She should have remembered

that if its genii could come from the north coast of Africa in response to a mere glance into its mystic depths, he could quite as readily come from a distance of a half dozen miles up this winding river.

Mrs. Lord was thoroughly angered at herself, and, when she reached her room, she threw the gem into her jewel case, resolving that never, under any circumstances, would she take it up again,—at any rate not until her husband returned, and then only to explain and, if possible, prove to the satisfaction of his unimaginative mind its wonderful properties; and there is every reason to believe that she thoroughly meant to keep her vow.

Ben Hamed and Tom Parks did not return from their sketching tour until long after supper was over, and by that time Mrs. Lord, on purpose to avoid the Arab, of whom she was now more afraid than ever, had retired once more to the seclusion of her own bed-chamber. Somewhat later in the evening, seated at her window, she heard voices on the lawn below, and among them she recognized that of the artist.

"It was the most curious thing I ever saw," he was saying, "the heathen had taken a picturesque pose on the trunk of a tree that grew out over the stream, and I, with my easel set up and palette

in hand, could not resist the temptation to dash him in."

"O you horrid man!" Mrs. Lord heard Miss Shandon say, "he might have caught his death of cold."

At this there was a general laugh and the artist proceeded to explain that by "dashing in" he merely meant roughly sketching His Oriental Highness upon the canvas that he had before him.

Miss Shandon said, "Oh! oh! How stupid of me!" and, amid a few more little titters from the rest of the party, the listener heard Parks's bass voice going on with his story.

"For a moment," he continued, "Mr. Hamed had not the remotest idea of my intention. He sat there looking moody enough, and intently staring down into the waters beneath him; but it was only for a moment. Then he turned and saw me. He seemed to understand in a minute what I was up to, and you should have seen him bound off that tree trunk. He jumped as though he had been shot, and took to his heels as if a wild beast were chasing him for his life. In vain I shouted after him and waved my hands to him to return, laughing all the while at the humor of it, but he went on entirely unheeding, and in a couple of seconds was quite out of sight. I had often heard that Arabs and fellows of that sort, you know,

objected to sitting as models, but I never saw a practical exemplication of it before."

"Did he come back?" asked Miss Shandon.

"O yes," returned Parks, sending up a cloud of blue smoke from his briarwood, "he came back as suddenly as he left. I had almost given up all hope of seeing the fellow again when he suddenly appeared at my elbow. I was just getting out the luncheon when he arrived to share it with me."

Mrs. Lord marvelled not a little at this narration. Here was to her convincing proof that what she had seen and heard at the beach was no flight of fancy nor stretch of imagination. In her calmer moments, romantic as she was, she had been inclined to doubt somewhat her own senses. It was all so extraordinary, so improbable, that even though she had seemingly had occular and auricular demonstration, still she at times fancied that perhaps she had only been dreaming dreams and had seen visions. The testimony of the artist was all that was needed, however, to put to flight the last of these lingering doubts, and she now gave herself up wholly to a thorough belief in the reality of what seemed so utterly unreal.

The days dragged wearily by and the mails continued to bring letters for everybody and from everybody except for Mrs. Lord from her husband. The wife grew successively uneasy, wor-

ried and annoyed. She had now written to Mr. Lord several times but had received not a single word in reply, and the repeated disappointments had had anything but a salutary effect upon her highly-wrought nervous organization, while the continued presence of Ben Hamed in the house contributed not a little to her unrest. At times she longed for the soothing influence which she so vividly remembered to have experienced while wearing the moonstone, and, again and again, she was tempted once more to wear it, if only for a brief respite from the loneliness and dread of her present condition.

It thus happened one afternoon that Mrs. Lord, while suffering from neuralgic pain in the temples—a pain that had driven her almost distracted—forgetful of her vow never to yield to the ring's enigmatic influence, and neither asking nor caring where or how the Arab had disposed himself, flew to her jewel box, lifted the moonstone from its hiding place and passed it over the joints of her taper finger. As she did so she was sensible of a tingling sensation that ran along her arm and seemed to send an electric message to every part of her being. In a brief moment the throbbing pain in her temples had fled away, the mental strain which she had been undergoing was almost instantly relieved, and the same sense of peaceful

rest and quiet which had come upon her when she last had worn the ring was renewed, with even more pronounced and pleasing effect.

"It is worth a thousand menthol pencils," she said, and then she laughed as she had not laughed for weeks before; and, snatching up a hat from the bed, ran gayly down stairs humming merrily some light opera air as she went.

The reaction which had come with the ring was like the exhiliarating influence of champagne: her spirits were fairly bubbling, and the blood which had previously run so slowly through her veins now coursed freely and rapidly. She felt like dancing for joy, and she would doubtless have executed a Highland fling or sailor's horn-pipe on the padded parlor carpet had any one been present to extract melody sufficient for the performance from the cabinet organ, which was the only musical instrument the house afforded. As it was, there was seemingly, not a creature within sight or hearing, and so Mrs. Lord only just glanced into the little parlor as she passed by. Then she went out through the low doorway on to the piazza, and a moment later was skipping lightly down the steps to the river shore. A row-boat with the oars placed invitingly in the row-locks lay alongside the dock, and into this she sprang. She had pushed out and with short, but

vigorous strokes for one so slight as she, had rowed herself more than half way across the river before she noticed that the sky was overcast and that a great bank of leaden-gray cloud was being piled up in the west. The sun was completely hidden and everything indicated rain. Had the heavens opened at that moment and the floods descended, it is doubtful whether she would have been deterred from carrying out the purpose which she had in view. An impulse had taken possession of her, though she was scarcely aware of it, more powerful than any that had yet been exercised upon her, and this unrecognized force was pushing her on to reach the opposite shore at all hazards. Ten minutes more, and she felt the bottom of the boat grate on the pebbly beach.

Still bustling with an energy that was new and unusual, she sprang lightly out, and looking about until she could find an opening among the laurel bushes, she began the ascent of a hill carpeted with dead leaves, rank with underbrush and thickly overgrown with laurel, cedars, pines and scrub oak. By the time she reached the top of the bluff which overlooked the river, the wind was blowing a gale and the bank of clouds was every minute becoming more ominous. She paid little heed to either. A clearing on the very edge of a cliff, softly spread with pine needles,

seemed to offer her an inviting resting-place and there she sat down. The breeze swept river, now dotted with white-caps and reflecting the darkened heavens, surged by many feet below her. Custis's house was a mere white speck among the dark foliage of the far-distant opposite shore.

Mrs. Lord seemed utterly unconscious of all these forerunners of what promised to be a heavy thunder shower. She sat there as calmly and contentedly as though in her own little parlor in Washington Place, while the river's waves beat a fierce tattoo on the gravel beach below and the wind played a wild, weird melody as it swept through the woody growth that reached from the top of the bluff to shore at its foot. Her eyes were fixed upon the moonstone that adorned her finger and which was now glaring with a white light altogether out of proportion to its size. Suddenly, as she gazed, there was a dazzling, blinding flash and the ground beneath her seemed to shake with the crashing and reverberating peal of thunder which almost instantly followed it. To her the flash seemed to come from the ring rather than from the yellowish-gray clouds which were scurrying seaward in great unbroken masses that every moment promised a deluge, and in the thunder she heard only the strong, sonorous voice of its genii, Ben Hamed, whom she now saw

standing before her, looking, she dreamed, more beautiful in his Oriental picturesqueness than ever mortal man had looked before.

An absorbing desire to fall upon his neck, to bury her face in his bosom, and to pour into his ears the story of her woe took possession of her. The sense of repugnance, approaching to detestation, which she experienced, when meeting the Arab while the ring was not upon her finger, was utterly forgotten, and in its place had come a heart-thrilling, and soul-threatening passion that, if encouraged, would doubtless lead her to lengths that in the future she would never cease to regret. It was the utterance of the Arab that recalled her in some slight degree to the peril of her position and gave her a sort of hazy, misty warning of the brink upon which she was standing.

"Come!" he said, approaching her, his gray eyes full of admiration and glowing with a passionate light that spoke of ungratified desire, "Come! It is Allah's will, and the time is now ripe!"

He spoke loudly enough for his voice to be heard above the roaring of the tempest which was sweeping down upon them. Mrs. Lord made no answer to his entreaty, and he came a step nearer.

"Allah has sent the storm," he said, "to bear Ben Hamed and his bride back to the fair and

laughing land on the borders of the great sea.

"Come," he added, "we have no time to spare."

He stooped and caught her by the arm and would have lifted her to her feet had she not stoutly resisted. Her will, her common sense, the fruit of her early ethical training, were asserting themselves—feebly it is true—but with sufficient power to dispute at least for the moment, the outlawry of the Oriental's proposition.

"You forget I am a wife," she said, by way of protest, her words scarcely audible amid the noise made by the creaking of the wind-bended trees, the throbbing pulses of the frenzied river, and the rumble and roar of the thunder. She spoke gently and without the least sign of excitement, still unmindful of the storm, still only partially heeding the compromising danger of her position.

"And am I not a husband?" asked Ben Hamed, with an air of assurance, as if this should be an all-sufficient answer to a foolish and weightless argument.

At that moment a deep roar of thunder, followed quickly upon a sharp-lined flash of lightning, that seemed for the instant to open the gates of heaven and afford a glimpse of the inconceivable glory within.

"Come! It is Allah's summons," the Arab continued to urge, but Mrs. Lord moved not.

Finding now that it was useless to attempt to force his would-be bride to her feet, he threw himself at full length upon the ground by her side; and, while the battle between the clouds waxed hotter, more fierce and more tumultuously noisy, with, strange to relate, up to this time, an entire absence of rain, the Oriental poured into the not-wholly-unwilling ear of his heart's enslaver a tale of the most passionate love and devotion.

"Ben Hamed's soul has yearned day and night, moon after moon, sun after sun, for the light that springs into those sweet eyes from the depths of that soul that is his paradise," he said. "O, loved one, do not deny me!" he pleaded, "Allah has willed it. Has he not sent me to thee many leagues over seas and across rivers, from the far East to the land where the sun loves to dwell? Has he not put love into thy heart and into mine? Has he not given us to each other? Speak, dear one," he urged, drawing himself close to her, "tell me what thy heart says—tell me truly that I am thy heart's mate; that my soul is thy soul and that thy soul is mine."

The wind which had been blowing so strongly sank almost to a whisper as he spoke, and the river's waves for the nonce seemed to be playing a lullaby on the pebbly beach. Even the thunder joined in the Arab's pleading and moaned plain-

tively. The elements were apparently conspiring to further his cause.

"But my husband!" the woman protested, prone to yield, while her conscience slumbrous, yet not wholly insensate, mildly chided her for her proneness.

"In Tunis," argued Ben Hamed, "the wife who is childless is put away by her husband. Zahra is childless, and when Ben Hamed returns he will put her away. Thou and thou only shall walk beside him in his roof garden and in his court-yard; for thee shall his pomegranites and his apricots grow, for thee shall his fountains make pleasant music, and for thee shall his slaves fetch and carry. Why should his heart's joy hesitate to leave him who has neglected her? Why should she not rather fly to the heart that yearns for her, that offers her all its garnered wealth of passion and devotion. Come, come, my love, my idol," and his arm stole about her waist and drew her close to his breast.

The passionate pleading of his voice charmed her even as the eyes of the wily serpent are wont to charm the dove. Her heart beat tumultuously, her cheeks flamed with the hot blood that fairly gushed through her veins. Her head sank upon the Arab's shoulder; his face bent over hers. Victory—exultant and confident was reflected

from his every feature. Ravenously his lips sought her lips. She felt his warm breath upon her cheeks.

At that instant the storm, which had been coming nearer and nearer, broke in fury above their heads. The hush which had, for a moment, been over all nature was but the treacherous peace which foreruns the hurricane. A blaze of electricity seemed to envelop everything in the dazzling whiteness of its blinding light, and with it came such a crackling, deafening cannonade of thunder as to threaten the demolition of the hill on which the couple were reclining.

Ben Hamed drew back in affright and Mrs. Lord trembled in every limb. The rain now began to fall in big, splashing drops; the wind, which was once more blowing like mad, forcing it in through the leafy canopy which afforded little if any protection. Ben Hamed rose to his feet and stretched out his hands invitingly towards the woman. She was on the point of yielding. Already she had gathered her legs up under her and was about to rise. Her gaze was still fastened upon the man who had gained by some means, she asked not how or why, such an influence over her, and, as she gazed, she noted that a wondrous change had overspread his face. The expression of passionate love and adoration had

instantly given way to one of the most abject and cringing terror. His arms dropped to his sides, and he retreated backward to the very edge of the cliff. Trembling with apprehension lest he should fall, she was about to shout to him to be careful, when, suddenly, she felt her wrist grasped from behind, and the next instant she was jerked roughly to her feet. Mad with indignation, she turned and looked at the person who had thus rudely assailed her, and, to her utter amazement and consternation, she saw there, with an expression of mingled reproach and joy upon his features, the familiar form and face of her husband. At the same moment a shrill scream echoed amid the rumble of the thunder, the roar of the wind, and the swash of the waves. Whether it was the cry of an affrighted hawk, or the despairing shriek of the Arab is a question which must ever remain unanswered.

VI.

ITS GENII CHANGES ITS MIND.

Reproach and Joy were fighting for the mastery of John Lord's face when his wife looked into it, while far down in his heart a battle between the forces of Jealously and Trustful Love was being waged even more hotly. In fact the former engagement was but a skirmish between outposts of the latter forces. Reproach being enlisted in the cause of Jealously, and Joy being a sanguine, venturesome, and brave soldier from the ranks of Trustful Love. Now the one seemed to have the advantage, and now the other, and thus the struggle was prolonged even for many hours after Mr. Lord had succeeded in getting his wife safely across the river and into the shelter of Custis's quaint but hospitable hostelry. They had much to tell each other, these two, between whom there had never before been so much as a misunderstanding and whose wedded faith and happiness were now on the verge of simultaneously running awreck on the reef of superstition. In the excitement of that episode

on the bluff, the ring which had been the seed, root, and branch of all their trouble had been wrenched from the lady's finger quite unknown to her and had been lost, and with the ring had gone all of the Arab's fascination for her—all his eerie influence, leaving her soul-sick, self-reproachful and conscience-stricken. She would fain have told her husband everything: have unburdened her heart to him and have trusted fully that he would forgive her folly, take her once more into his entire confidence and love her as of old; but, when about to act upon this impulse, unfortunately for both, Reproach got the better of the skirmish in Mr. Lord's face; she remembered his practical, prosaic nature and his lack of sympathy for anything approaching the superstitious, and she was silent.

She still felt some resentment against her husband for having paid no attention to her numerous letters beseeching him to return to her, and, when he ventured a chiding word for her wholly unaccountable conduct of the afternoon, instead of making a confession, she replied curtly with a series of questions: "Why," she asked, "did you neglect me? Why were my letters unheeded and unanswered? Why did you leave me in the very path of temptation?"

They had eaten their supper in silence, and,

the storm having passed over meanwhile, they were now seated together on a rustic bench in a little grove some distance below the house on the grassy lawn overlooking the river. The moon, which was at its full, was filtering its soft silvery light through the fluttering leaves of the trees whose branches spread over them. As yet Mr. Lord had offered no word to explain his sudden appearance on the bluff at the very moment when his presence was most needed, and Mrs. Lord had expressed neither disappointment nor pleasure at what had happened.

"I am rather surprised," Mr. Lord said in a voice unusually hard for him, but in which his wife, who knew his every inflection, detected a little tremor of injury, "that you should imagine for one moment that I would willingly or knowingly neglect you. You might, I think, have made some excuse for me; have looked on the bright side, rather than the dark; have believed me still loyal, until you had proved me otherwise. Instead of jumping at once to the conclusion that I had received your letters and declined or delayed answering them, would it not have been more in keeping with the part of a loving and trustful wife to have concluded that they had not reached me?"

Mrs. Lord could but admit the justice of this

plea, and her own sense of guilt and unworthiness assumed, on the instant, proportions that made explanation on her part ten-fold more difficult than before. She was thoroughly ashamed of herself, and what she had hitherto considered simply an impropriety and in a degree justifiable, now appeared to her in the light of her husband's defence, as a most heinous crime. How, under these conditions, she was to tell him what, when she came calmly to review the several phases of her meeting and association with Ben Hamed, seemed more like a bit of fairy lore than practical common-sense, she could not imagine, and so she maintained an apparently moody silence and made matters still worse by her reticence.

"For my part," continued Mr. Lord, after waiting a few seconds for his wife to speak, "in spite of the seemingly very compromising situation in which I discovered you this afternoon, I have reserved my judgment until I shall have heard what you have to say for yourself."

Jealousy just now had the upper hand in the conflict, and Mr. Lord knew it. His sympathies, however, were all on the other side, and he longed for reinforcements which his wife alone could send, and which would, he felt sure, turn the tide in favor of Trustful Love, and result, he hoped, in a complete routing of the enemy.

"And did you not receive my letter?" Mrs. Lord asked, at length, still endeavoring to evade the issue.

"Not until yesterday," was the reply. "You see, I was away for weeks from the post-town I gave you as my address, traveling about the country looking for specimens, and, stupidly enough, I did not leave instructions to have my mail forwarded. When I returned I found your letters awaiting me, and I started immediately to come to you. I travelled night and day, and reached here to find that you had gone out in the face of a threatening thunder storm. Do you wonder that I was surprised? I asked Neetie where you had gone, and she told me she had seen you rowing across the river which was then a raging torrent. I was more astonished than I tell you; but there was no time for conjectures as to the whys and wherefores, and so I borrowed a water-proof for you from Neetie and started after you. It was a pretty hard pull, but, thank Heaven! I arrived in time.

"I suppose, dear, I should have written while I was away," he added, "but I was so fagged out when night came that I was glad to crawl to bed, and in the morning I was up bright and early and away again."

At this Mrs. Lord once more began to justify

herself. Her husband, she said, had been thinking more of rocks and stones than he had of her. He had been unable to spare from them even ten minutes in one day, during a period of three weeks, in which to write her a line, and, if she had in the meanwhile forgotten for a few hours her duty as a wife and stepped aside from the straight line of conjugal propriety, it was his fault as much as hers, and she told him so.

"I may have been somewhat to blame," the accused replied, "and for the sake of argument, my dear, I will admit that I should have found time to write to you; but, sins of omission are usually considered a grade more pardonable than sins of commission, and while mine belonged to the former class, yours was certainly of the latter. If your husband did wrong it was only because he put off until to-morrow what he should have done to-day, while you, it seems, committed an error, deliberately, with your eyes open, and with a desire to gratify a spirit of revenge which had possession of you."

"You are wrong, Mr. Lord," the wife answered, "altogether wrong," and she spoke in a nonchalant tone that was very exasperating to her husband, who was thoroughly in earnest. "If I have committed what you call an error, and it's very probable I have, it was done neither

deliberately nor in a spirit of revenge. It was done because I could not help it; because the moonstone ring which you gave me possesses an influence over me stronger than my own will."

Mr. Lord turned sharply and looked into his wife's face. Was she mad, or was she trifling with him? This was the question, the answer to which he would read in her eyes. As for her, she had passed the outer door leading up to her confession and she was somewhat appalled at the thought that she had now gone too far to turn back, and that, much as she should desire not to proceed, her husband would certainly force her to go on.

It thus happened that Mr. Lord found in his wife's face no sign of frivolity or laughter. She was very much in earnest, and he discovered it at a glance.

"Your words need explanation, my dear," was all he said, and Mrs. Lord, hesitating no longer, plunged at once into her story, telling everything, from the first time she had seen the vision in the milky depths of the gem, up to the sudden appearance of Ben Hamed on the bluff that afternoon; her husband listening with unwavering attention to every syllable of the tale.

When she had finished, he took her hand in his and spoke kindly and reassuringly, for her voice

had trembled with emotion as she had related her experience across the river, and at times had presaged tears.

"This that you tell me is very remarkable, my darling," he said, "and you will forgive me, I know, if I tell you that I fear your vivid imagination has this time carried you farther than was at all safe for your own honor or for mine. While I have not the faintest notion that you do not thoroughly believe all that you have told me, I must tell you, at once and firmly, that you have been deceived, that this fellow you call Ben Hamed is a scoundrelly charlatan, and that I never want you to speak to him again."

"But the ring he wears!" suggested Mrs. Lord, "it is identically the same as mine, I'm sure there can be no imagination about that."

"Possibly not," replied her husband, "but I am inclined to be incredulous, and, until I see it for myself, I shall continue to think that there has been some chicanery about the ring and that your romanticism has got the better of your perceptive faculties."

The discussion was continued for several hours, and when at length husband and wife returned to the house they were no nearer having reached an agreement as to what Mrs Lord claimed was nothing less than a phenomenon, and as to what

Mr. Lord looked upon as merely a remarkable stretch of a tensile imagination, than they had been at the beginning. Trustful Love had won the battle in Mr. Lord's heart; Jealously had been put to flight, and Joy, having achieved the victory over Reproach, sat triumphant upon Mr. Lord's now smiling features.

The ring had been lost, and, in spite of its considerable cost and great beauty, it is quite certain that neither Mrs. Lord nor her husband regretted in the slightest degree its disappearance, while both hoped and prayed from their soul's depths that they would never see it again. It had come very near shattering the entire fabric of their wedded faith and happiness, and, whether or not it possessed the enigmatic properties which Mrs. Lord asserted it did, it was better lost and forgotten than where it could ever again offer temptation to a woman only too prone to yield to what was to her the seductive witchery of its moon-like gleams.

It was not strange, therefore, that both Mr. and Mrs. Lord were more chagrinned than pleased when, on the second day after the events just recorded, Miss Shandon, bright with smiles that made her crow's-feet more than usually prominent, came dancing up the path from the river, holding forth to their disappointed and unwel-

coming |view the bit of jewelry which they had with so much satisfaction believed lost beyond retrieving.

"And to think," she added after explaining how she had been spending the morning at "the bluff" and had found it half-buried in pine needles, "and to think that you should have lost it, Mrs. Lord, and said nothing about it to anyone. Had it been mine I should have written out notices about the loss, offering a suitable reward to the finder, and posted them in conspicuous places all over the village,"

"And so you think you should have a reward, do you Miss Shandon?" Mr. Lord said, with a laugh that was meant to hide his vexation. "What would you consider a suitable one?"

"O, I didn't mean that," the elderly maiden giggled, as she slipped the ring upon her finger, and, holding her hand off from her gazed admiringly upon the jewel that decked it. "It is very beautiful, indeed. I have always admired it ever since I first saw you with it, Mrs. Lord, and," she added, "if you would only allow me to wear it for a little while I should feel that I had been more than repaid for finding it."

"O, *do* wear it," Mrs. Lord exclaimed, and her words mingled with Mr. Lord's "Why, certainly, by all means."

In fact both were so glad to have Miss Shandon wear the ring that they bounded to accept her proposition with a precipitance that was calculated to arouse suspicion. Mr. Lord desired to prove by this that his wife had been carried away by her fancy, and she, in turn, was equally as desirous of proving by it that there was more in the moonstone than could be accounted for on any theory save that of supernatural agency.

Ben Hamed had not been seen since his disappearance over the edge of the bluff two days before, and Mrs. Lord feared that he had been killed by his fall. Her feeling now towards him was one of repugnance, rather than admiration or affection, but her humanity was strong and assertive, and she was oppressed with a dread apprehension that his body, cold and lifeless, was lying in the bushes below the plateau upon which he had so ardently proclaimed his passion. As to the correctness or falsity of her surmises, however, she was not to be left very long in doubt, for, on that very afternoon, after having loaned Miss Shandon her moonstone, she discovered the Arab in all the vigor of robust health, apparently not in the slightest degree injured by his abrupt descent from the cliff, sitting beside that gushing maiden on one of the rustic seats that dotted the lawn and overlooked the river.

This was the first time that she had ever known Ben Hamed to address a word to Miss Shandon, and she at once attributed it to the fact that the moonstone now reposed upon that lady's finger. That she had permitted her admiring gaze to rest on it for a considerable period and had thus attracted the genii of the ring, Mrs. Lord most firmly believed; and in this she saw a bit of evidence which she would not fail to make use of in support of her argument with her husband as to the occult powers possessed by the gem he had given her.

Before many days she had many other bits of evidence of a like character, equally confirmatory of her theory and of sufficient strength to have convinced, she thought, any man under Heaven, save her matter-of-fact and prosaic spouse. Mr. Lord listened attentively to all she told him; he looked when she told him to look, and he even sank his pride and his sense of honor so far as to do some eavesdropping at her suggestion; but he accounted for everything on purely natural grounds, and not one of her revelations shook in the least degree his conviction that her romanticism was responsible for all the wonders of the ring and the world which it had opened to her view. That the Arab should have transferred his attentions from Mrs. Lord to Miss Shandon was not at all remark-

able in his eyes, inasmuch as Miss Shandon was unprotected, while his return had given to Mrs. Lord one who, "the Heathen" very well knew, would guard her against insulting protestations of affection. Further, Miss Shandon who was quite as romantic, if a trifle less imaginative than Mrs. Lord, encouraged the Oriental in his most passionate outbursts, and, under the circumstances, Mr. Lord argued in contravention of his wife's expressed views, it was not to be wondered at that the two were always together. It was by no means clear to Mr. Lord that the fellow could suddenly appear and disappear at will or project himself instantaneously considerable distances. Mrs. Lord held firmly to this belief, and endeavored to prove that she had reason to believe so, but none of her proofs were, as has been said, convincing. Her husband had an explanation for nearly every one of the instances she brought to his consideration, and, when the case seemed utterly unanswerable, he declared that the fellow was merely a clever trickster or juggler who had learned some of the black art of the Orient, and was making use of it to mystify the ready-and-willing-to-be-humbugged women of the Western hemisphere.

Miss Shandon was certainly very much infatuated with the juggler, if such he was, and she was not loth to talk of what she was pleased to call

her conquest. Her chances of securing a husband had been reduced to the minimum by her wealth of years and her poverty of attractions, and she snapped at the Arab as a snapping mackerel snaps at a hook.

"I know I am a foolish girl," she said with a giggle, addressing Mrs. Lord one day, about a week after having found the ring, "but do you know I have consented to marry Ben Hamed, and go with him to his home in Tunis! He is a most charming man, and his description of his residence is something to dream of. I have so few friends here in America that I shall not mind going in the least, and I *do* love him so much."

Mrs. Lord felt a pang of self-reproach as she heard this, and she was on the verge of asking for the return of her ring then and there, believing, as she did, that it, and it only, was responsible for the existing state of affairs; but her good intentions were nipped in the bud by Miss Shandon herself, who said: "I am going to leave here at the end of next week, Mrs. Lord, and if you will let me wear your moonstone until then, I will send you a lovely present when I get to Tunis."

Mrs. Lord laughed.

"Thank you very much," she said, "I am sure you are very welcome to wear the ring as long as you choose. Had it not been for you I don't

suppose I should ever have so much as heard of it again."

In the early evening Miss Shandon and the Arab went for a row over the rippling waters of the picturesque river. Ben Hamed had learned to use the oars with considerable skill, and as he bent back and forth, pulling a strong, steady stroke, the little boat shot along with an easy, graceful, rapid motion that was just what his passenger most thoroughly enjoyed. Between each flash of the oar blades in the dying sun-glow he whispered words of love to the woman in the stern, who sat with a pleased smile upon her somewhat withered countenance, drinking in his compliments and his endearments with the greediness that comes of long fasting. Now and then she allowed her hand to hang over the side, and her fingers to play in the water that washed along with a swish and a swirl as the boat cut through or danced over the tiny wavelets.

Suddenly she drew her hand back with a little cry of dismay.

"It is gone!" she exclaimed, and her eyes had a frightened look—"I have lost it! Oh! What shall I do?"

The moonstone ring had slipped from her finger into the water, and by this time was doubtless buried in the soft black mud at the river's bottom.

She leaned over the boat's side and gazed longingly into the darkening tide. The last glow of the setting sun had departed and dusk was already giving way to gloom. Every thought of her companion had gone with the lost ring, and her whole desire now was to recover the costly jewel which, she could but admit to herself, it had been most foolish of her to borrow. She knelt upon the stern seat and fixed her eyes upon the spot where she believed it had disappeared, turning her back upon the rower. She no longer heard the impassioned words, she no longer heard the splash of his oars; her seven senses seemed to have sunk to the bottom of the river with the borrowed moonstone, and she knelt and gazed as one suddenly stricken dumb.

The cold night-wind blowing in from the sea, an hour later, brought her back to herself. She rose from her kneeling posture, her limbs stiff from the prolonged strain of her position. The stars had come out and were sparkling in the dark vault overhead. The lights in the houses on shore gleamed through the fringe of trees on the river bank towards which the boat was drifting. That it was drifting was now apparent, and, turning sharply, she saw to her amazement that she was its only occupant. Ben Hamed had disappeared.

Whether he had jumped over-board or whether he had rowed to shore, landed, and then left her to drift, she knew not. His conduct, she considered unexplainable, and, strangely enough, so strangely that she could not understand it, she no longer felt for him the least affection. That his desertion of her could have wrought this sudden change in her feelings, she would not believe, and, when at length she had paddled herself to shore and had unburdened her soul to Mrs. Lord, she was quite ready to listen to that romatic person's story and to accept without question her theory as the only one which could account in a manner at all satisfactory for the strange and unnaturally sudden change in her sentiments. She, in turn, told Mrs. Lord many strange things as to her experiences while the moonstone was in her possession, and these were in turn related to Mr. Lord, but without changing in the slightest degree his fixed opinions on the subject.

Nevertheless he admitted that he was not sorry the ring had at last been lost where it would not be likely to be recovered, and he expressed to Miss Shandon his hope that she would not be in the least troubled because she was the agent who was responsible for its losing. He owed her thanks rather than reproaches, he said, for the ring had clustered about it anything but pleasant

memories for him, and he hoped never to see it again.

As for Ben Hamed, Miss Shandon was the last person who saw him. He never returned to Custis's and his account still stands on the books of the Captain with debits for the six weeks of his stay and not a single credit. There was a suspicion when, after several days from the date of his desertion of Miss Shandon he did not return, that he had plunged from the boat after the ring, and had been drowned. His companion admitted that while in the dazed condition in which she had been for over an hour he might have done so entirely unknown to her, and she rather favored the theory. Mrs. Lord also looked upon the river as the Arab's grave, and the fact that his curious bronze-bound chest had disappeared mysteriously and suspiciously from his room before anyone thought of going there to look for him, did not tend in any manner to shake her faith.

No one thought it worth while to drag the river, however, Captain Custis agreeing fully with Mr. Lord, who held firmly, in his stolid, matter-of-fact way, that the idea of the fellow having drowned himself was ridiculous.

"He was merely a clever scoundrel," he was wont to add, when speaking of the affair, "and

there was no more of the supernatural about him than there is about me. He came back to the house at dead of night, threw his box from the window, and followed it himself by way of the stair. I feel as well satisfied of that as if I had seen him do it."

HOW BELFORD WON.

THERE was something very snug and cosy about the quarters in which Mr. Allison Belford found himself at five o'clock on a certain afternoon in late June. He was seated on a softly-cushioned divan of the color known as crushed strawberry; there were curtains near-by of gendarme blue, and there were bevelled mirrors set in delicately carved satinwood, in which he could, without so much as turning his head, get a full view of his reflection. What he saw therein was a passably good-looking young man of five and twenty, attired in a light gray suit of Scotch tweed, and wearing a traveling cap of the style sometimes called a fore-and-aft. The young man had just taken a scented scrap of paper from his pocket and was reading what was written thereon. The writing was large and straggling, and the words were very few, but they were evidently of considerable import. Mr. Belford had received that scrap of paper a half-dozen hours ago. It had been handed to him just after he had written his name and the name of the city whence he came, upon the register of the Grand Pacific

Hotel, and it was so mandatory in tone that he had, then and there, without a moment's hesitation, decided to retrace his journey from New York to the Lakes by the train which the missive indicated. In pursuance of this decision he was now ensconced in one of the drawing-rooms of the Pennsylvania's vestibuled train—its New York and Chicago Limited—which was, with throbbing pulse, at that moment drawing out of the Union depot onto the Fort Wayne road. As the five cars, hooded and linked together into the form of a great, long serpent, with a mammoth locomotive—with eye and heart of fire, and breath of steam and smoke—for a head, swept swiftly and smoothly over the steel rails, and glided sinuously along the shore of Lake Michigan, Mr. Belford replaced his letter, which he had now read for the fiftieth time, in his pocket, and started for a walk through the python's body, glancing from side to side as he went as though in search of some one. Nor was he very long, apparently, in discovering the person for whom he looked. Although he gave no glance of recognition in the direction of a certain fair young woman who occupied a place midway down the car in which his own quarters for the trip were situated, it was evident from the fact that his scrutinizing gaze relaxed after passing her, that it was she he had started in quest of. A close-fitting Newmarket

coat of a soft, brown color enveloped her slender, girlish figure, and an English turban of the same hue crowned her shapely head. There was laughter in her long-lashed blue eyes, and in her prettily-bowed mouth, and as Mr. Belford passed on his way down the car this laughter seemed in imminent danger of breaking forth into a merry, rippling peal. That it did not was certainly due to a great effort, and the effort was in turn due, in a great measure, to the presence beside her of an elderly, thick-set man, with ruddy cheeks, who had eyes like hers, and who was unmistakably her father.

An hour later Mr. Belford, whether by chance or design does not matter, was sitting opposite the young woman and the elderly gentlemen in the dining car. Several times during the process of soup-eating, his eyes and the girl's had met, and on each occasion the laugh had seemed about to get the better of the latter's will; but each time she had either conquered the impulse, or obtained relief by turning to her companion and making a remark which she had used as an excuse for her levity. The dinner served was irreproachable. The service was excellent and the cuisine superb. It was a dinner calculated to put a man on good terms with himself and his fellows, and it was in no small degree owing to it, doubtless, that when, after it was over and the two gentlemen met in

the combined library and smoking car, they fell to chatting in the most natural way in the world.

"A marvelous train, this!" remarked the girl's father, who had left his charge to herself and was enjoying to the full a fragrant Havana. "One can be as comfortable here as in one's own home, I take it!"

Mr. Belford agreed with him.

"Railroad enterprise has brought the coast much nearer to Chicago than it used to be. I can remember the time when it was a great undertaking to transport one's family to the seaside for the Summer, but now, with such a train as this, why it's nothing at all."

"Very true," Mr. Belford assented, sending up a cloud of smoke to join the clouds that were already afloat above his head. "Do I understand that you are bound for one of the summer resorts?"

"Yes," returned the other, "I'm taking my daughter to Long Branch for the month of July. She has been at school in the East and since she came back to Chicago, nothing would do but I must take her to Elberon for the Summer."

"And you being an indulgent father, Mr.—I beg your pardon, you did not mention your name?"

"Leavett! and yours?"

"Belford," replied the young man, "I was about to remark that you, being an indulgent father, Mr. Leavett, could not refuse such a charming daughter's wishes."

"Well," responded Leavett, as he threw his head back and took a long pull at his cigar, "I'm not as indulgent as you may suppose," and there the discussion of the relations of father and daughter came to an end, if the conversation did not.

In a little while it branched off onto the subject of ceramics brought up by the rich display on the book cases and brackets of the luxuriously-furnished car in which they were rushing through the night, and from that it trended to other art works and finally to prints—line engravings, etchings and mezzotints, in which Mr. Leavett proved to be a connoisseur. Mr. Belford was evidently well posted on the subject and he talked so intelligently and well regarding Albert Durers and Woollets, and the long line between, that he quite won the gentleman's admiration.

In a word, the conversation was so pleasant and alluring to Mr. Leavett that the time sped by unnoted, and before he was aware of it, it was nine o'clock, and the train had stopped for a few minutes at Fort Wayne, where the dining car was being detached. Then it was that the two

men returned to the sleeping car, and then it was that Mr. Leavett, who had become so impressed with Mr. Belford's intelligence and gentlemanly demeanor as to deem him worthy of the distinguished honor, presented him to his daughter, Miss Madge Leavett, who received him graciously but with the same inclination to laugh that had characterized her from the first.

In spite of this inclination, however, which she now no longer restrained, Miss Leavett, proved a most delightful girl. She was as bright as a new dollar and she was an exceedingly agreeable conversationalist. There were, now and then, remarks exchanged between her and Mr. Belford, which were not caught by her father, or if they were, were not understood, for the reason that they did not want them to be, but this was managed so adroitly that Mr. Leavett did not deem it indecorous, and in the end Mr. Belford further ingratiated himself by insisting that Miss Leavett should for the rest of the trip occupy the drawing-room which he had secured, while he took the berth in the body of the car which had been engaged for her.

The following morning the trio breakfasted together off Haviland china in the dining car which had been taken on at Pittsburgh, and during the forenoon, the better part of which Mr.

Leavett spent with the Smoky City's newspapers in the library, Mr. Belford and Miss Madge, in the seclusion of the cosy little drawing-room where the balmy June breeze rustled the silken hangings, and the sun-light came in a flood, grew wonderfully well acquainted in a seemingly marvellously short time, even going to the extent of holding each other's hands, and, it must be confessed, now and then exchanging kisses on the sly.

So much engrossed were they that they scarcely noted the Horse Shoe Curve around which the train swept, each moment revealing a new picture in the glorious panorama of nature.

The afternoon, however, Mr. Belford devoted to Mr. Leavett. Cigars were again the excuse for an hour or two in the smoking car, and the two gentlemen once more plunged into a discussion of art topics. By a clever turn the younger man switched the elder from the ideal to the real, and then it was of Miss Madge they talked.

"You said last evening," Belford went on, "if I remember correctly, that you were not so indulgent a father as I might suppose. Now, from what I have seen, I am disposed to combat that theory. Why, my dear sir, you are indulgence itself."

"Pardon me," replied Mr. Leavett, removing his cigar from between his lips, "you are mistaken,

and I'll prove it to you. I am now taking my daughter East, simply because I discovered since her return from boarding school that she is head over heels in love with a young man, the brother of one of her schoolmates, who, I also learned, was about to come West in order to be near her. How did I find it out? I'll tell you: By accident one of this fellow's letters fell into my hands. It was full of romantic twaddle, but it explained what I had been puzzled to understand. Madge from the very day she came home until about a week ago, had urged me to take her to Long Branch. Then she suddenly changed her mind and declared she would rather spend the summer in Chicago."

"Ah! I see," put in Belford with a smile, "he wrote her he was coming to see her?"

"Exactly."

"And you were opposed to her having any one in love with her? Surely Mr. Leavett, you cannot expect such a beautiful girl as that not to attract worshippers!"

"I don't expect it. I suppose she will marry, the same as other women, but she's too young yet to think about it, and moreover I was prejudiced against this fellow, because I had never seen him or heard of him; because I didn't so much as know his name. The letter he wrote was merely

signed 'Your Own.' *Her* own! Think of it! A girl like that. I went to her and told her what I have told you. She wanted to tell me something about the fellow, but I wouldn't let her. I don't want to know about him," and Mr. Leavett grew so hot over it that he gave vent to a condemnatory epithet of considerable force.

Mr. Belford sat silent for a moment and waited for him to cool off.

"But the young man was not to blame!" he urged at last, "you were in Chicago, he was in New York. He could not court Miss Leavett's father before he courted her."

"She was too young, she *is* too young, to be courted at all," argued the old gentleman.

"She is how much younger than her mother when you began operations in that direction?" queried Mr. Belford.

Mr. Leavett winced.

"That is neither here nor there," he said "if I had known the man, and if I had found him a gentleman, it might have been different. As it is I don't know him, and I don't want to."

Mr. Belford arose.

"Pardon me Mr. Leavett," he said, "if I contradict you; you *do* know him!" and he said it in such a way that his companion could not fail to comprehend his meaning.

"What!" he exclaimed, "Nonsense! You! Why I don't understand the thing at all. I introduced you to Madge myself."

"You did, yes. This was my second attempt; the first was the wrong method, as you have explained to me."

"Still I'm in the dark," Mr. Leavett urged, "Where did you come from? How—"

"Perhaps this will explain," and Mr. Belford handed to his sweetheart's father the scrawl which thirty hours before had been handed to him over the desk of the Grand Pacific Hotel upon his arrival in Chicago.

My Own,

Take the Pennsylvania's vestibuled train back this afternoon. We go by it. Papa must be won and you alone can do it. We must be strangers until he makes us friends.

Forever, Your Own.

P. S.—If you love me win him.

Mr. Leavett looked up.

"You love her," he said.

A MODERN MIRACLE.

I am not likely ever to forget the first time I met Clement Wynkoop. Every detail of the meeting, though it has been five years since it occurred, is still vividly before me, and even now I seem to hear the brassy clangor of the tall, old-fashioned clock which stood in the bar-room of the Eagle Hotel at Berryville, striking its ten noisy notes, as together he and I entered the room that chill November night, winking and blinking at the sudden change from gloom to glare. He was taller than I, and apparently younger. He did not look to be over thirty years old, and he was so slightly built as to warrant one in describing him as thin—but he was not awkward by any means, and his thinness seemed to add to, rather than detract from, a certain grace which appeared to be natural to him. He was not a handsome man; his cheeks were too hollow, his cheek-bones too high, and his large, black eyes too deeply set for that—and there was over all an expression as if mental or physical suffering had put its mark there, but his

face gave indication of more than ordinary intellectuality.

Though we had traveled up from town on the same train, and had been driven over from the railway station in the same stage-coach, of which we were the only passengers, each had been ignorant of the fact that the other was like himself a representative of a great metropolitan daily, and engaged on the same mission, and we had not exchanged a word. We had never before in the course of our journalistic experience been thrown together, probably owing to the fact, which I afterward learned, that Wynkoop had but recently come East, his knowledge of newspaper work having been gained in that great field of progressive journalism—the West.

The dignitary who combined in his burly person at once the offices of bar-tender and room clerk, turned the register around after we had placed our names there, and, while the ink dried upon the page, spelled out what we had written. Having grasped the fact that we were newspaper men, he gazed at us as though we were some sort of moral freaks, and an expression that might have meant either awe or admiration settled down upon his weather-beaten features, as, with his forearms resting upon the bar, he surveyed first Wynkoop and then myself.

"'Spose you've come up from town to see the hangin' to-morrow!" he ventured at length.

We signified that such was the case, and I added, that we should be glad if he could accommodate us with rooms.

"Well, you see," he said in a peculiar drawl that is a distinctive feature of the dialect in that section of the State, "we're just a bit crowded: The fact is, we've only got one room left in the house, and the best I can do for you is to give you that."

Wynkoop objected.

"I'm afraid," he said, as he picked up his satchel which he had placed on the bar, "that I cannot enter into any such arrangement. Not that I should in the least object to you as a roommate," he added, in a tone of apology, turning to me, "but for your own sake I'd rather that we had separate rooms."

"But he can't give them to us," I urged, wondering all the while what he could possibly mean by not wishing to room with me "for my own sake."

"Then I shall have to go elsewhere," he decided.

"There's nowhere else for you to go," chimed in the man from behind the bar, "there's not another hotel in Berryville."

"Can't you put a cot in the bar-room here?" Wynkoop suggested.

"If I had a cot, I'd be glad to do it," was the response, "but the hangin' to-morrow has jammed the house right up chock-a-block, and every cot's engaged. The room I'm offerin' you was reserved for the deputy Sheriff, who comes from Creek-town, and who afterwards decided to stop with the Sheriff, or I shouldn't have that. I've given up my own room and am goin' to make a bunk of the bar here myself."

Wynkoop hesitated a moment. He gazed across the high wooden counter and seemingly fixed his eyes on the glasses that decorated the shelf behind it, while he pondered over the situation.

"And there is but one bed in this room you speak of?" he said at length, questioningly.

"Yes, sir!"

"O I dare say we can arrange things," I said to him, "Come, let's have a look at the place."

Wynkoop yielded at length, and we were shown to the apartment which had been reserved for the sheriff's deputy.

It was a narrow, cheerless room, with a high-post bedstead in one end, with a window, bare of any pretense of shade or curtain, directly over it. At the other end was a wash-stand, and midway between the two, on either side, were a couple of

green-painted chairs. Our guide set his candle down on the wash-stand and awaited further objection from the representative of *The Times*. No objection, however, was forthcoming.

"We will make the best of it," he said, "I dare say we can put in one night together."

"I have no doubt of it," I replied, though I was not a little nettled at his previons pronounced opposition to the arrangement. Did he imagine from my appearance that I was a thief or cut-throat who meant to rob or murder him while he slept? Surely he insinuated as much.

Then he consulted me as to the hour at which we had better be awakened. We decided that as the execution was to take place at ten, in order to give ourselves ample time, we had better be called at eight, and the burly clerk was so instructed. Was there anything we would like? Had we matches and soap and towels? Yes, we were well-provided for in these respects, but Wynkoop said he would be obliged if he could have a pitcher of ice water and some glasses.

When we were alone together he opened his satchel and took out a flask and some cigars. Then we drew our chairs up within the circle of the candle's light and in a little while were wooing the sociability to which an indulgence in a little good whiskey and tobacco almost invariably

tends. Each had many odd incidents of journalistic experience to relate, and, as a matter of course, our conversation included a *resumé* of the executions we had witnessed. From these the rather thread-bare question of repentence within the shadow of the gallows, whether real or imaginary, came up. At that time I was somewhat of an agnostic, and I was inclined to ridicule the idea that a murderer who, throughout his life had been defying the moral laws, could, when brought to face death, wipe out all his past, and spring at one leap into Abraham's bosom.

"God is all poweful?" said Wynkoop and he spoke so reverently, and with such feeling that I determined to test further his belief.

"If there be a God?" I suggested.

He looked at me sharply, and I knew at once that I had touched a sensitive chord. His dark eyes twinkled excitedly in their deep recesses.

"You doubt God's existence?" he asked.

"I didn't say so," I replied, "but there are many who do."

"And there are many who make a terrible—yes fatal, mistake," he went on. "There is a God—a God whose power you cannot in the least comprehend. The same God who wrought miracles in Galilee and Judea eighteen hundred years ago, and who is even now doing just as wondrous

things. My dear Mr. Holt, the day of miracles is not past.

"Twelve months ago," he went on, "I was an atheist. To-day I am positive—absolutely certain, not only that there is a God, but that there is a God more powerful than you can conceive of."

He was so terribly in earnest that to dispute the question with him would have been madness. I merely asked him the reason for this now fixed belief.

"Ah! you are asking me now what I cannot tell you," he said, "but I know it."

"Will you tell me," I went on,—now that we were better acquainted I ventured to ask what I did not dare to before—"Why you so objected to occupying this room with me?"

He started, but recovered himself almost instantly.

"Certainly," he replied, "I meant to have told you before. I am a somnambulist, and I feared that I might disturb you by prowling about the room when you wished to sleep."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and, before either of us could answer it, a little fellow, whom I recognized at once as Miles O'Reilly, of the *Herald*, had burst into the room, and, in his impulsive Irish style was telling us how glad he was to find that friends had arrived in "the

forest primeval" to which he likened the town of Berryville. He had seen our names on the register and had come up without delay to welcome us to "the home of the Druids." He had been shaking me vigorously by the hand as he said this, and now he turned to Wynkoop, who with his chair tilted back against the wall, and his hands in his trousers pockets, sat pulling energetically at his cigar and sending up clouds of smoke that enveloped him in a blue haze.

"I'm glad to see you, Wynkoop," he said, extending his hand, "its the first time I've laid eyes on you since the Chicago convention."

For an instant I saw that Wynkoop hesitated about taking the hand that was offered, and in that instant a flood of thoughts dashed through my mind, as thoughts will do at times—thoughts that it would take several minutes to put into words. Was there a coldness between the men? Had there been some misunderstanding on Wynkoop's part of some action of O'Reilly's? Had O'Reilly done something that Wynkoop deemed dishonorable? All these and more went scurrying through my brain in less than a heart-beat. Then I saw that Wynkoop was leaning forward and was reaching out his left hand to O'Reilly.

"Excuse my left hand, old man!" he was saying, "but I cut the little finger of my right

this morning. It's very painful, and I'm afraid to trust it with you."

His right hand was still in his pocket. How strange! I thought. Not ten minutes ago I had been looking at that right hand attentively. For some reason, I know not what, my eyes had been drawn to it. All the time it was exposed, and it had been exposed frequently since our meeting, my gaze had at intervals been riveted upon it. I had noticed that it was very white—unaturally white, it seemed to me—that it was very thin, and that the nails of the long tapering bony fingers were livid. How odd, I thought, that I did not notice the cut. Had it been there I must surely have observed it.

"That hand of yours is in hard luck, Wynkoop," O'Reilly replied, "I remember at the Chicago convention you had a boil on it or something. How the deuce do you write?"

Wynkoop seemed rather nettled at this remark.

"I manage it," he said shortly. "Won't you have a cigar? And I think you'll find something left in that flask if you don't mind using one of those glasses—or stop, I'll ring for another."

"Ring!" exclaimed O'Reilly, with a laugh, "Not much ring. Do you imagine you are at the Hoffman or the Windsor? Electric bells are unknown in Berryville."

Then he helped himself to the flask's contents, lighted a cigar, sat down on the chair I had vacated and joined in the conversation, which, when I had seated myself on the foot of the bed, once more took the vein of journalistic reminiscence. It was well on to two o'clock in the morning before O'Reilly left us, and after that we were not long in getting between the sheets.

How long I had slept I do not know. It may have been an hour, it may have been more. To look at my watch, the first impulse usually upon awaking at dead of night, never once occurred to me, probably for the reason that an over-powering sense of horror possessed my whole being. I awoke suddenly, with a start. I was trembling from head to foot with a chill that seemed to threaten the rending of soul and body. Upon my breast lay something cold as ice, and my heart was growing numb under its chilling weight. For an instant I lay quite still trying to gather my scattered senses. My memory for the moment had deserted me. Where was I? I stretched my eyes open in an effort to prove to my own satisfaction that I was wide awake. Then it all came back to me with a rush. I was at Berryville and a strange man, whom I had never seen before that night, was my bed-fellow. The room was so dark that I could distinguish nothing, but with the re-

turning memory came also the same acute sensibility that told me that it was an icy hand that lay upon me. I could feel the long, bony fingers pressing into my flesh with a chilling clutch. Never in my life had I experienced a sensation so horrible. For another minute—a minute that seemed like an eternity—I lay there unable to move. Then I gathered all my resolution and energy, and rose upon my elbow, but that icy hand still grasped the muscles of my breast in a grip that was death-like in its firmness. To bring myself to take hold of it and throw it from me, I could not.

As I lifted my head from the pillow the moon came out for a moment from under a cloud, and sent a stream of cold, blue light in through the shadeless window, revealing—O, God! Even now the recollection of the ghastly sight chills my blood and thrills me with horror as I write!—that I was in bed with a dead man. There beside me, lying upon his left side, with his right arm stretched over me, his right hand grasping me in its death clutch, lay Clement Wynkoop, to all appearances as lifeless as any corpse I ever saw. The flood of moonlight fell full upon his face. His deep-set eyes were wide open, staring and glassy; his jaw had dropped, and the pallor of death was upon every feature. I gazed spell-bound for a

moment, and then a heavy cloud floated over the moon and that horrible sight was lost in the darkness which once more enveloped everything.

I am not naturally a nervous man, but so sudden was the shock in this case that I trembled as though stricken with ague. With a terrific effort I sat up, and, as I did so, the hand, which had still been clinging to me, lost its hold, and I heard the body roll over on its back with a ghastly sound that set my heart beating even faster than before. Recovering myself as best I could, I crawled over the dead man and stood upon the floor. Then I staggered to the washstand, and with trembling fingers found a match, struck it and lighted a candle. Its feeble, flickering light only added to the uncanniness of the scene.

For a time I could not gain sufficient courage to go back and look at the dead man, but at length by dint of active reasoning—that after all death was only death in no matter what guise it came—I took up the light and returned to the bed. As I thought, the body lay upon its back. I raised the candle and looked at the face.

Was I mad or dreaming?

Bewilderment in a moment had taken the place of fear. There lay my bed-fellow, his eyes and mouth closed, breathing regularly and sleeping apparently as peacefully as the most healthy of in-

fants. There was not the slightest indication of death anywhere about him. In one sense of the word, it was a relief, and in another it was not. That I had seen him dead five minutes before was, in my mind, not open to dispute. I was satisfied that I could not have dreamed it, and I was equally satisfied that it was not imagination. Even yet I could feel the pressure of that dead hand upon my breast.

Ah! I said to myself, I will touch that hand and see whether it is naturally warm, or whether it is still cold and deathlike. It still lay across his own breast, where it had dropped when its hold upon me had relaxed. I reached out to take it, when the sleeping man moved. I stepped back, fearing that he would awaken. He did not, however, and I returned, still intent upon investigating the phenomenon that had so distressed me, only to find that the hand that I wished to touch had been placed beneath the cover, and to get at it without disturbing the sleeper was impossible.

After the experience I had just gone through I could not make up my mind to go to bed again. I accordingly dressed myself and taking an old newspaper from my pocket, I sat down by the washstand, and read it through from the first column to last, advertisements and all, stopping every now and then to wonder over the dead face

I had seen and the dead clutch I had felt. When the gray light of early dawn made sickly the yellow light of the second candle I had burned, I was still far from the solution of the mystery, nor did Wynkoop himself do anything towards solving it, when, upon his waking, I told him, in somewhat modified terms, of the fright I had. At first he seemed startled and then distressed, but finally regained his composure.

"It was the prospect of seeing a triple execution," he said, as he stooped down to see to part his hair in the all-awry looking-glass which hung too low for him. "You are not up to it I am afraid. You were dreaming, Holt, dreaming—that was it. As the modest old lady remarked, you had the nighthorse."

* * * *

Six months went by. For me they flew along rapidly. My occupation was congenial, my pay was reasonably good, I was contented and happy. I seldom met Wynkoop, but I heard of him now and then doing excellent work, and, according to all reports, making a mark for himself. He was soon to publish a novel, some one told me, and it promised to be a book that would make a hit because of its originality. That was all anyone knew. As for the subject and the title they were both a profound secret.

I was sitting in the office one bright May after-

noon, when some one brought in the news of what was said to be a suicide at one of the uptown hotels. The city editor assigned me to the task of "working it up"—by which he meant not only to describe how the deed was planned and carried out, but to "get down to," or in other words, discover the cause of it. I took the elevated road and fifteen minutes from the time I left the office I was standing before the desk of the hotel in which the tragedy had occurred. There was no indication of anything unusual. Guests were coming and going; the whirl and bustle of busy Broadway made hubbub without; the buzz and hum of many voices in conversation, discussion and chat made things lively within. No one seemed to know or care that some poor unfortunate had put an end to an existence of which he had grown inconsolably weary. Now and again the marble-floored corridor rang with laughter—laughter that set my nerves jangling discordantly. I was not naturally nervous and this disturbance was unusual. I could not account for it. To investigate a suicide was nothing new or strange for a reporter of my experience. I had written up a hundred if I had written up one, and never before, even in my first efforts in this line, had I felt this strange grewsome excitement.

Behind the desk was a clerk whom I had

frequently met in a professional way, and, as I approached, he greeted me in a manner half serious, half jocular.

"Ah! Mr. Holt," he said "I am glad to see you. The very man we wanted. I think you will be able to solve the mystery."

A thrill went through me as he spoke and I feared that I would betray by look or word the nervousness which I felt.

"The mystery," I repeated—and my voice sounded unnatural to me—"Is there a mystery about it?"

"Yes. We are not just sure whether it was a suicide or not. The circumstances surrounding the case are very odd and there are no means of identifying the dead man, except through you."

"Through me!" I exclaimed.

"Exactly; through you!"

"But my dear fellow," I expostulated, "do you suppose because I know you and a good many hundred others in New York City and elsewhere, that I know every man who chooses to cut his throat or to have his throat cut in your hotel?"

"O not at all," was the reply, "but in this case the dead man left a sealed packet of papers addressed to you."

Addressed to me! If I was nervous before I

was more so now. In an instant I had thought of a dozen men of my acquaintance whom I believed possibly capable of such an action.

"Let me see the body," was all I said.

It was but a step to the elevator; and the elevator was not long in landing us on the second floor. We stopped before Room No. 323. My companion inserted a key in the lock, turned it, and opened the door. The warm May sunlight was streaming in at the windows. There was certainly nothing deathlike in the surroundings, nor did a hasty glance reveal any sign of the dead body. The room was one of the most richly furnished in the hotel. It faced Broadway, and connected with it were a bath room and bed room, this being the parlor of a suite of three apartments.

On the hearth of the open fire-place lay a mass of burnt paper, crisp and black. A large arm-chair with its back to the door stood beside a table in the centre of the room. Upon the table were a champagne bottle and an empty glass, a tall dish of fruit, some writing materials and two or three books. All this I saw in an instant.

"But the body?" I asked, "Where is it?"

The clerk led me further into the room, and I at once imagined he meant to take me into the chamber beyond. In an instant, however, this idea was dissipated. As I approached the chair

by the table I saw that it was occupied, and the next moment I was gazing at the dead body of a man, which I recognized at a glance.

It was that of Clement Wynkoop.

At first I could scarcely believe that he was not living and breathing. He looked so natural, sitting there with his head thrown back, a faint flush on his usually, pale cheeks, and his lips just parted as though he were going to speak. On his lap lay an open book. His left hand was holding it tightly, and the index finger of his right hand pointed to a passage midway down the page.

"That is the way we found him!" said the clerk, as together we stood gazing at the figure that seemed so life-like and yet which was so cold in death. "We have not disturbed a thing. We called in a physician who pronounced the body quite dead, and advised us not to move it until the coroner arrived. For his part, he said, he thought it was a case of heart disease. There is the packet on the table addressed to you, Mr. Holt, perhaps that will give us a clue."

I took it up. It was carefully sealed and neatly addressed in Wynkoop's small, cramped hand.

"I will take this with me," I said.

"Will you not open it here?" asked the clerk.

"No," I replied, "I would rather not. You can give my address to the coroner, and I will

produce the papers at the inquest if they throw any light on the case."

"But you recognize the dead man?"

"Oh, perfectly. He was connected with *The Times*. His name is Wynkoop—Clement Wynkoop."

"He registered as Winfield Clement," said the clerk.

"When did he come?"

"Last night, about eleven o'clock. He wanted the finest suite of rooms we could give him, and paid a day's board in advance. On going to his room he ordered champagne and a box of cigars. Then he wanted some fruit, and finally, of all things, he wanted a Bible. It must have been three o'clock this morning when he wanted the Bible. As he did not come down at noon, the chambermaid rapped at his door, but could get no answer. She entered by a pass key, and found him sitting there, just as you see him, stone-dead, with the Bible in his hands."

I bent over and read the passage to which his finger pointed. These were the words: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." That sense of superstitious fear or nervousness which had seized me as I entered the hotel, again took possession of me, and with it came back in all the vividness of reality the episode of the night

on which I first met Wynkoop at Berryville six months before. Again I seemed to feel the awful clutch of that icy hand; again I seemed to see the ghastly face with its staring eye-balls, and its hanging jaw. How much more like a dead man he looked then than now! Was it possible that this death too was a sham, a dream, an illusion like the other? After my experience of that night I should not have been surprised. It was not however. Wynkoop was dead this time beyond the shadow of a doubt. A *post mortem* established that fact, though it failed to establish what my testimony at the inquest did—that it was a case of suicide and not heart disease. How did I know it? By the papers that were in that packet and which,—partly by my influence as a journalist and partly out of respect for poor Wynkoop, who, though never very popular with the craft, was still recognized as a clever fellow in his way and entitled to have his last wish gratified—were not then published. His wish was that the facts contained in the packet should not be made known to the public under two years from the day of his death. Seven years have now slipped away and it is for that reason that I feel at liberty to tell what I have, and to give word for word the letter and the extracts from Wynkoop's journal which were contained in that bundle of

papers left in my care by the man who had grown world-weary before reaching his prime.

* * * *

The letter was dated midnight.

"I do not know why I should have selected you," it began, "as the man to whom to commit, before I go hence, the secret which for the last year and a half I have carried as the Spartan youth carried the wolf. I am impelled by an indescribable something that tells me I cannot die until I have made a full and free confession to man as well as to God of my crime and punishment. And with the impulse to write comes also the impulse to address that confession to you. This must be my apology. Perhaps the fact that you already know something of my affliction—for you will remember it when I recall certain incidents of our first meeting at Berryville six months ago—has had somewhat to do with my selection of a legatee. I beg of you do not make public the facts of my sin and my suffering until two years from to-night. By that time my faults will, perhaps, in a measure be forgotten, and men will be apt to think more kindly of me and give me a larger share of their sympathy than if the story were given when my shortcomings and idiosyncrasies were fresh in their memories to mitigate the pathos of the tale. Some day I wish you to

tell it. I wish it told because possibly it may save others from a fate as horrible as mine.

In a few hours I shall have passed the veil which hides the other world from this. You will find me here sitting in this chair, and the newspapers—yours and mine and the others—will record another suicide. People will want to know why I died. Tell them because of physical suffering which had grown unbearable—that will look well in print. That is all that the Coroner's jury need know for the purpose of a verdict.

I have resolved that my last hour shall be a bright one. I do not want to go out of my misery in gloom and darkness. My life has been gloomy and dark enough, God knows. Its last moments shall be as bright as I can make them. I have chosen and paid liberally for the best room in the hotel, I have lighted every gas jet in the apartment. I have fruit before me of which I shall eat before I die. I have wine, too, and with the wine I shall drink my release; I have it here before me as I write: a little phial containing a dozen drops or less of Scheele's hydrocianic acid. It is an easy death, they say. My heart-beats will grow slower and slower; more feeble and and more feeble until they have ceased altogether, and I shall have passed away from all the toil and weariness, the regret, the mortification and the

agony of this life into the— What? A few hours will tell. Speculation is vain. Before I go I shall burn every paper I possess—every trace of my past life will be gone except what is contained in the pages from my journal that I shall select and leave in a packet with this letter for you. Don't judge me too harshly. Think of me kindly sometimes. I have thrown open the windows and raised the shades to the top. I feel the cool midnight air fanning my face for the last time. In an hour all will be over."

The letter broke off thus. There was no formal ending, just as there had been no formal beginning.

The enclosed extracts from the journal were as follows:

Chicago, *December* 26, 1879.— Hard work yesterday attending Christmas celebrations. When it was all over Potter, Stevenson, I and some others spent the rest of the night at Gibbons' place. Metaphysics and religion the subjects of conversation. As usual I laughed at the idea of celebrating the birth of a humbug. Poor little Potter is a superstitious little fool with reverence largely developed. He was horror-stricken at the way I talked, and I rather believe he thought I was boasting, but I was not. I offered to bet him a month's pay he could not prove that there was any reality in the God he believed in.

"Prove to me there is not a God," he said.

"Your God is all powerful, is he not?" I asked.

"To be sure," he replied.

"If He be all powerful," I added, "let Him strike me dead, I defy Him!"

Little Potter turned pale at what he termed my "damnable blasphemy." I laughed at him, for there was no sign of that alleged All-powerful Being's existence. I still stood erect and smiling. Potter said his God would not deign to notice such a threat. My challenge was beneath the consideration of the Supreme Ruler. Did I think I could call down His visible wrath at my own sweet will? It was presumption. Poor little Potter!

January 1, 1880.—A week has passed during which time I have not had the courage to write. Even now I do not know how to tell the story. I am ashamed to confess it. Am I paralyzed or am I dying by inches? Can it be that there is a God, and that He heard my threat? I despise myself for being so weak as to believe it; and yet I am undergoing an experience that is as horrible as it is unusual. On the morning following the night of my boast before the boys at Gibbons', I awoke with a strange pricking sensation in my right arm, as if the circulation had been

stopped and had suddenly started again. The next morning my arm was numb. The circulation had apparently stopped and had not gone on again. Nor has it since been resumed. My arm and hand have grown colder and colder and both are a deathly gray white, like the arm and hand of a dead man, while my finger nails are livid. Curiously enough though, there is no sign of decomposition, and my hand still retains its power. Though all feeling is gone I can grasp my pencil tightly in my fingers and I can write as well as ever. Where will all this end? This is the question. There is something hideously unnatural about it, and I am afraid for that reason to consult a physician. I have rubbed that arm and hand until the skin has peeled off and yet there has not been the slightest sensation nor the faintest sign of circulation. From shoulder to finger tips it is *dead*, DEAD, DEAD.

January 5.—Heaven help me, or I shall go mad! When I wrote before I had no idea of the horror of this thing that has seized upon me! That it is the curse of a God or a devil I have no longer the slighest doubt. Ever since my hand grew so marvelously cold I have refrained from shaking hands with any one for fear the unnaturalness of it would be remarked and I should be questioned.

To-day my old uncle from St. Louis called at the office to see me; I had not met him for a month of Sundays, and, as he was always a favorite uncle of mine, I had grasped his hand before I thought what I was doing. He sprang back with a cry that sent a thrill through me. The utmost horror was pictured in every feature. I dropped the hand I was holding, but it was some minutes before he could recover himself enough to speak. Then he told me of the strange thing he had seen. As I took his hand, he said, and he felt its icy pressure, my face suddenly became the face of a dead man. My eyes stared glassily and my skin looked bloodless and cold, while my parted lips were purple.

"I could have sworn death had suddenly come to you as you stood there," he said. "O, my boy, you cannot imagine what a shock you gave me!"

Ah! yes. I know it now, that same vision will haunt everyone whom I touch. I am a leper. The time must come when men will flee from me as they would from a plague. After all there is a God—a terrible, awful God—all-powerful, all-hearing, all-seeing. Have I not proof of it? Is not this God's recompense?

March 18.—My affliction grows worse and worse. I have been thinking about having my arm amputated at the shoulder, but should I do

so, the surgeon would discover my secret, and I can never bring myself to reveal that to living man. No, I must suffer on, sometimes I think death would be welcome, and yet I am too much of a coward to bid it come. There is a God, and there is a hereafter. May not the hereafter be worse even than this living death? I am not willing to take the risk.

June 4.—Chicago is full of newspaper men and politicians. Half the latter are drunk and insist on shaking hands. When they shake with me they see a ghost. It is a ghastly trick to play them, but it is their own fault.

October 5.—I am going East. There is a suspicion here that there is a mystery about me, and I cannot abide it. If any man should discover my secret and make it public, I think I would kill him.

New York, November 11.—I met a man at Berryville yesterday named Holt. He is on the *Tribune.* Had to sleep with him because hotel was crowded. During the night my hand fell upon him and awoke him, and the usual result followed. I turned it off in the morning by telling him he had been dreaming. If he had insisted that it was not a dream, and had guessed the truth, God knows what I would have done.

December 26.—Just a year has passed since I was stricken with this living death. It seems like a century. And now the worst is coming. O, God is this just? I reported a Christmas sermon yesterday, the burden of which was that there is forgiveness for all who ask it. Christ was born to save the worst of us. And yet I cannot ask it. This is a part of my punishment. Is it that I have committed the unpardonable sin? The thought drives me mad! Will relief never come?

January 1, 1881.—I have been making New Year's calls, with my arm in a sling. I was compelled to resort to that as a means of avoiding shaking hands with my right hand. Cartwright, of the *Post*, who is a literary chap and somewhat of a society man, wanted me to join him in his New Year's calling, and to oblige him, and for the sake of diversion I did so. Perhaps it is the most unfortunate step I have ever taken. At one house I met a most charming little woman, as pretty as a picture and as gentle as a tame dove. Margaret Willoughby she is called. We had the pleasantest of pleasant chats, and when I left her she invited me to call again. Shall I go? My reason bids me not to; my heart tells me I cannot keep away.

January 21.—I have seen Miss Willoughby again. I met her at the theatre, and she asked

me why I had not called. I must go. Surely there can be no harm in admiring her and spending a pleasant hour in her company.

March 15.—Margaret grows more and more charming. I have begun to write a romance in which she will be the heroine, and a man afflicted as I am the hero. It will be a strange story surely. When it is finished I will read it to her. I think she is fond of me. Indeed I am sure of it. My romance shall be my proposal. If she is willing to accept me knowing what I am, I shall be happy.

April 13.—I am less miserable than at any time since God's curse fell upon me. I may be happy yet,—who knows? With her as my wife, I should not mind this dead thing so much. From a few words she unconsciously let fall to-night I know that she loves me. And I,—. Heaven knows how I love her! My romance is approaching completion. I have worked hard at it, neglecting everything else, and in a week I shall have finished it. Can it be possible that a great joy awaits me? I am afraid to hope, yet cannot help it.

April 22.—The romance is written. Not an hour ago I put the word "Finis" on the last page. To-morrow I will read it to her. Oh, Margaret, my beloved, you will not fail me! I am sure of it!

April 26.—Hard work at the office prevented

my seeing Margaret until this afternoon, when I read the romance to its close. When I looked at her there were tears in her eyes.

"I do not wonder she loved him," she said. "He had suffered so much, and he loved her so fondly."

"And would you love me so if I had suffered so much and loved you so fondly?" I asked.

It is to be wondered at that I am happy? Have I not held her to my breast? Have I not kissed her lips? Has she not told me that she is mine forever, that nothing under Heaven can part us? I will strap that dead arm to my side and forget that it exists. I will learn to use my left hand altogether. I have been practicing with it of late, and I shall soon be able to do without my right, well enough.

May 10.—The darkness of midnight has come at noonday. The cup of joy has been dashed from the lips that had but touched its contents. God's wrath is greater than I dreamed. His punishment more than I can bear. O Heaven, that I should have to bear this! My brain is aflame. My conscience is prodding me with sharp sticks. Death, no matter what it brings, cannot be worse than this living hell. To find happiness but to lose it is the worst torment. How it came about I know not. I was so sure that hand

of mine should never touch her, and yet, O God, it was Thy vengeance that directed it—its icy clasp against my will fell upon the soft whiteness of her rounded arm. She shrank from me, gazed at me for a second, and then fell back with a piercing cry—a cry such as I never heard before, and such as I pray Heaven never to hear again—a cry in which all the awful horror of the sight before her seemed to echo and re-echo—a cry that tore my heart to shreds and filled me with the very agony of despair. When she recovered from her faint, her reason had fled. She was raving mad. To touch her sent her into a paroxysm of fear. The mere sight of me—I who loved her so much, who would have given my life for her a hundred times over, who would have gone through fire and flood rather than the least harm should have come to her—was the signal for shrieks of the wildest alarm. I cannot write more. The thought of it is maddening, the writing of it torture. From that hour to this those shrieks have rung in my ears, that look of fear has been before my eyes. Remorse has filled my soul. Sleep has fled from me. Another day of this and I should be as mad as she. I feel it, I know it. Death alone can prevent it.

A TRAP OF CUPID.

I was not always a dreamer. I can readily remember a time when I was wont to ridicule those people who believe there are such things as God-given messages, sent to you while sleeping, that will bring you good or ill, in accordance with how you receive them. I was one of those who considered these warnings, hints, suggestions, merely "the children of an idle brain, begot of nothing but vain fantasy." I was in the habit of referring to anything seen or heard in my sleeping hours as "only a dream." All that is changed now. I am a dreamer. I am not a Spiritualist in the generally accepted sense of that term, yet I have a strong and abiding faith in a certain force of which we as yet know very little—a force, the power of which seems boundless, which follows no given rule and is utterly beyond control.

The story I am about to relate is, I will admit, marvelously strange and seemingly beyond the shadow of reality. Had anyone told it to me three years ago I should have poohpoohed it as

nonsense. About it there are many things which defy explanation. All my attempts to investigate them have been futile. It is impossible to get to the bottom. Just so far I can go and no farther. The lines, clear and firm and symmetrical in the foreground, run off into a mist that defies penetration.

Six years ago I spent a month in the Engadine. I had been studying art in Paris during the winter and had gone off on a sketching tour among the mountains as soon as the laughing days of June had followed the smiling days of May. Travelling from place to place I found myself one evening at a quaint little inn in a village called Bergun. I had come down from St. Moritz and was on my way back to Paris and my studies. Never had anything I had seen so impresssed me, as did the picturesque effects of that little bunch of houses on the bank of a rushing river above, which pine-girdled peaks rose into the white moonlight. The houses were low and deep-roofed, with overhangings eaves and rickety balconies, and with windows small and many-paned. Firewood was piled beside the doorway of each little chalet, and here and there as I walked along the dusky, rocky roadway out of the town, upon a log of wood or in a heavy, clumsy chair sat a beery villager enjoying the

evening and his pipe. I never forgot Bergun, and often would I take out the sketches made there and gaze on them with rapt interest, while I could imagine myself once more in the heart of the Alps, beside the rushing river, looked down upon by the rocky hills and the high-sailing moon.

Three years had passed—over three years. It was in the latter part of November. I was home again in dear old Philadelphia. My work had been recognized as meritorious, I was a member of the National Academy of Design, and I was gradually working to gain a place in the front rank of landscape painters. I had been painting all day, elaborating one of my Engadine sketches. It was a picture of a rocky gorge, with a frail hand-bridge crossing over a stream which rushed in a torrent through the gorge's narrow confines. I had succeeded in getting a capital moonlight effect upon the water, and when I fell asleep it was with a satisfied sensation that comes after the successful accomplishment of a desired end.

I had never been given to dreaming. Very seldom was my sleep any more than a blank page, but on this night "I dreamed dreams and saw visions." I dreamed as never in my life I had dreamed before. I was in Switzerland again—in Bergun, with its picturesque houses, its dusty

road, its mountains, its river, and its gorge, but I was not alone. It seemed that I had spent a week there, and that the week had been passed in the society of a family of New York people of the better class—intelligent and refined as well as wealthy. In that one night I experienced that of which in my waking hours I had never had anything but a very faint idea. I had always scouted love as a thing for poets to rave about, as something more mythical than real, as something that could be cultivated, but that would soon die for want of attention. I believed firmly that I should never love unless I forced myself to it, and that I should be constant only because of a continual self-watchfulness and effort in that direction.

In that one night my creed was exploded. I loved. The object of my adoration was the younger daughter of the family with which I seemed to have spent the pleasant week. She was just eighteen; but she was not to be compared for one moment with the chits of girls whom I had been accustomed to associate with that age. She was a woman, and all that the word woman implies. Moreover, she was a beautiful woman; beautiful with a *chic*, piquant beauty that I have never seen, or heard aptly described. She was gentle, amiable and loving, and I felt that there was nothing in the world I would not do for her.

It seemed that I was at the end of my week's sojourn. I must perforce leave on the morrow. Together she and I strolled out upon the chalet bordered road, past the Swiss householders who sat smoking their pipes, up through the dust and over the rocks into the gorge, the river foaming below us, and the moon flooding all the scene with its cool glow. Before us lay the bridge I had sketched, and toward it, hand in hand, we made our way. At length we stood upon it, gazing down upon the phosphorescent glitter of the rushing waters below.

I spoke to her. Then and there I told her the story of my uncontrollable love for her; then and there I asked her to promise me that she would be my wife; and she—sensible girl that she was—and she never seemed more sensible, more true and loving, more womanly than at that moment—told me in return, without any mock modesty, without any attempt to belittle her passion, that my love was returned in all the fullness of her young heart's desire. Would she be my wife? Did I know what I was asking? Was I quite sure that I loved her as much as I said I did? Would my love not waver after parting from her? Would it not be better that I should wait and see? All this she wanted to know.

We talked it over quite calmly together, though our hearts beat fast, and even in the white light of the moon I could see the blood mantling her cheeks and brow. At length I yielded to her. She was right. I had known her so short a time. I could wait. She would be home the following November. It was then June. I must not see her again, I must not write to her, but if, after six months, I still loved her as then, I should come to her. I should spend Christmas at her father's house in New York. She repeated her address to me. It seemed quite familiar. I clasped her close in my arms. I leaned down to kiss her. I opened my eyes. It was broad daylight. I was staring at the canopy which stretched across the top of my four-post bedstead. I had been dreaming.

For weeks I tried to banish the dream, but it was useless. It was so real, so intensly real, that I could not rid myself of the impression it left upon me. It was certainly a strange experience. I was in love with a woman I had seen only in my sleep; in all probability a woman who never existed. Her name and address, however, were ever before me; I remembered them quite distinctly.

It was the week before Christmas. Almost a month had passed, and I was still filled with a long-

ing to see once more the object of my strange vision. I prayed that I might dream of her again, but my slumber was as blank as a snow-covered plateau. As I sat at my desk, thinking, thinking, thinking, her image ever before me, her voice still ringing in my ears, a sudden impulse seized me; an impulse which had come time and time before, but which each time I had put off as unworthy the notice of a sensible man. It was to write to the address which I so well remembered. It can do no harm, I said to myself, I will do it.

I wrote—wrote as though the dream had been a reality—told her that my love had never wavered, that I longed to see her once more, and that, if quite convenient, I would be with her on Christmas eve. I sent my regards to her father and mother, and mentioned her younger brother, who had won my especial esteem because of his love for art. After I had posted the letter I laughed at my own silliness. How foolish! I said. It will go to the dead letter office. In spite of this I hoped against my better judgment for an answer.

Two days later, as I sat down to breakfast at my club, a waiter handed me three letters. One was a bill; another was from New York, but it bore Goupil's imprint and I knew it was on a business matter, and the third—it was a square envelope,

addressed in a scrawling womanly hand, and it was postmarked New York. A strange feeling came over me—unaccountably strange. There was something so unreal, unnatural in it all, that the perspiration came out upon my forehead in cold drops and my hand trembled so I could scarcely open the letter.

With an effort I commanded myself and broke the envelope. Nervously I pulled forth the contents. I glanced at the signature. It was her name. Hastily I looked it through. There was no mistaking it. It could not have been written by anyone but she. There were incidents referred to of which my letter had given no hint—incidents which had occured—so far as I was concerned—only in a dream. The letter ended with a cordial invitation to come at once, and her father had added a postscript in which he urged me to accept his hospitality. I went, still doubting, though the letter was seemingly convincing.

It was Christmas eve. The streets were alive with people; the shop windows were aglow with light. All was merry bustle and activity. Everybody seemed to be rushing here and there, jostling each other as they passed. Yet I moved among them, made my way through the throng as one who was still dreaming. It was all so odd, so strange.

At length the house was reached. I had been admitted. I had been ushered into a warm, richly furnished reception room, decorated with Christmas greens. Upon the hearth a wood-fire crackled and flamed. For a moment a great fear seized me. Suppose they should not be the people! Suppose they should not recognize me! Suppose it should all prove to have been a mistake!

For a moment only was I thus tormented. The door opened and she stood before me. She, whom I loved as I never loved woman before, stood there in all the healthful vigor of life, her face aglow with welcome, her hands stretched out to receive me. A second only and she was in my arms. Doubts and fears were flung to the wind. She was mine. It was no dream then—of that I was certain. It is no dream, now, of that I am equally certain. Yet neither my wife nor I have ever been able to explain the mystery of our meeting in the Engadine. Can you?

THE WIZARD'S JAR.

I.

Although the sun shone very brightly that Fourth of July morning it was by no means as warm a day as many that Mr. Harrison Blodgett had experienced; and for this small favor he was duly thankful. He was, however, lonely and dejected, and the prospect of spending the holiday in town was not an alluring one. The cause of Mr. Blodgett's dejection, was, that he was in hard luck.

Five months before, while living in a little village up the State, he had come into a legacy of ten thousand dollars through the death of his grand uncle. About the same time he had read an advertisement in one of the newspapers, that had set him wild with the speculative fever. It was enticingly worded, and it promised handsome returns in the stock market for small investments. He had forwarded a small cheque to the address given and in a few weeks he had received word that his money was doubled. The letter that brought him that news suggested the advisability

of his being on the spot personally to superintend his ventures, and he had hastened to town by the next train. The old story was only repeating itself. He invested heavily, and still more heavily, and in a little while he was considerably out of pocket. As is usual with beginners in stock speculation he had confined his operations to the bull side of the market, and, when June made its farewell bow and July tripped on to the scene, the bulk of Mr. Blodgett's money was fast locked in a way that meant ruin for him should he be forced into liquidation. At that moment he was living from hand to mouth on what he could manage to snatch from ten-share "flyers" in one or another of the bucket shops.

In view of all this it was not surprising that the glorious Fourth found Mr. Blodgett in anything but holiday spirits. The young man heaved several deep sighs as he brushed his auburn locks before his cracked mirror, and he sighed again as he adjusted a flaring red necktie in place, and otherwise prepared to take his departure from the room that had grown oppressive to him.

He strolled into the public park which was just opposite his lodging, and seating himself where he could watch a group of children at play, he had his thoughts distracted for a time from his own loneliness and misery by their idle prattle

and romping. The sight of the children, however, brought to his mind thoughts of his little nephews and nieces at home, and, being a kindly young man at heart, he became impressed with an idea that he ought to send the little chits some presents. Without more ado, therefore, he started in quest of a shop to make his purchases.

Block after block he travelled and in vain looked for an open store. Windows were covered by wire screens, and doors were fast-barred. He had at length about come to the conclusion that he would have to postpone his purchase until the morrow, when he suddenly stumbled upon what appeared to be an old curiosity shop.

It was a curious, dusty, grimy place with shelves running around it, crowded with all manner of quaint and beautiful articles, while the floor was thickly strewn with larger pieces of quite as wonderful appearance. In the midst of all stood a little man, with dark curly hair and a hook nose that told his visitor quite as plainly as words could have done that he was a son of Abraham. Mr. Blodgett in looking about for something that would make a suitable gift for his sister's children, was attracted by what appeared to him to be an oddly-shaped tobacco jar. It was a light blue in color, and was decorated with rays of gold diverging from a circle in the middle of one side. The

lid was peaked, somewhat resembling a cap, and upon this the gold rays ran upward.

The proprietor of the shop declared that the rays were real gold, imbedded in the clay, after the manner of *cloissonné* enamel, and he also explained to the would-be purchaser a most curious feature in connection with the jar. When it had first come into his possession several years before —he had secured it, he said, at a sale in London of an old East Indian trader's effects—in the centre of the medallion, surrounded by the gold rays, was a clearly-defined representation in silhouette of a bull. As years went by this figure seemed to have faded out. He had not examined it for a long while, he said, but he discovered now it was completely gone. Yes, he said, it might be used for tobacco, but he believed it was originally intended to hold coin. It was called the Wizard's Jar because of the lid, which looked like a wizard's cap.

There was something about it that pleased Mr. Blodgett and he bought it. The price asked took all the young man's spare change, and he accordingly postponed his purchases for the little ones until a more convenient season.

II.

When Mr. Harrison Blodgett awoke on the morning after the Fourth and glanced from his place in the centre of the four posts of his bed at the Wizard's jar which he had placed on the mantel shelf, he saw something that was calculated to fill him with astonishment. In the centre medallion, where yesterday there was nothing but pale blue glaze, there now appeared the silhouette figure of a sturdy bear of a dark blue color. The bear was represented as seated upon its haunches and with its fore-paws engaged in pulling down some imaginary object. Mr. Blodgett remembered that the Hebrew had spoken about the figure of a bull on the jar in its palmy days, and now here was the figure of a bear. It at once struck the young man that there was something peculiarly significant about this, and in a second he was out of bed and closely examining his purchase. The picture of the bear was as clear and distinct as though it had been painted there. He was quite sure that there was no optical delusion about it, for he looked at it in every light, and the figure was always the same.

Mr. Blodgett was short of several stocks in a down town bucket-shop, and he determined, tak-

ing this, an omen of good fortune, to stay short, nor was he at all regretful when, returning that night, he remembered that those stocks had each fallen at least five dollars a share. He spent the evening by his own fireside and he gave especial attention to the Wizard's Jar. He examined every one of the gold rays minutely, and he imagined that in their curls and twists they resembled a succession of somewhat distorted R's. The bear was still plainly visible too, and he became impressed with the idea that the Wizard's Jar was telling him as plainly as it could that he had better sell Reading, He had a hundred or more shares of that stock in the broker's office in which he dealt, and the books showed that he was out of pocket about five dollars a share on his purchase. It was well margined, however, and if he sold it he would have sufficient free money to go "short" quite as much as he was now "long." The next morning the jar still bore its bear colors and the rays still wore their R shape. Mr. Blodgett accordingly acted on the impulse which was upon him and switched to the bear side of the market. In fact he accepted his losses in every stock in which he was interested and sold every share of Reading he could raise the money to protect. It was a great venture, he admitted, but the Wizard's Jar had advised him correctly the day before,

and he was determined, as he put it, "to back his luck."

The wisdom of this determination was not long in being established. Reading stock tumbled and and continued to tumble until, before July had sped, Mr. Blodgett had quite made up his losses, and was in a fair way to make a fortune for himself. About the beginning of August after the stock had dropped fully fifteen points, the dark blue bear began to fade and the R's to straighten out their twists. Then it was that Mr. Blodgett began to buy in to cover his contracts, and before the bear had quite vanished from view as it did in a few days, he was entirely clear of his short interest in Reading and had deposited in bank a very tidy sum in the way of profits. The stock market had been weak now for quite a long period under adverse influences, and indeed it looked as though it might go still lower. Mr. Blodgett, nevertheless, did not waver. He followed his jar's advice blindly, and, when the rays began to twist themselves into so many L's and S's and a picture of a bull began gradually to develop itself upon the medallion, he lost no time in putting his entire capital into Lake Shore. The next day news quite unexpected and of an exceedingly favorable nature came out regarding this one of the Vanderbilt specialties and it shot upward like a rocket.

III.

The next Fourth of July found Mr. Blodgett fairly rolling in wealth, possessed of hordes of friends, and engaged to be married to Miss Henrietta Smithers, the daughter of an ex-member of Congress, and as charming a girl as ever lived.

He went to Mr. Smithers's country seat to spend the holiday as a matter of course, and as fortune would have it, he was detained there a fortnight, being stricken down with a fever on the very day he expected to return to town.

The doctor was called in and commanded that he should have absolute quiet and rest, and in order to relieve him from any chance of excitement or worriment over business he was not to be permitted even to see a newspaper. In vain he pleaded to be allowed to glance at the stock quotations, but his nurse, who was none other than Miss Henrietta herself, was oburate and denied him, out of a mistaken sense of her duty, even the single look which he implored.

On leaving the city he had neglected to leave any address with his brokers, and when at length a newspaper was allowed him, he saw the full effect of this neglect. The stocks in which he had placed the bulk of his large fortune had gone against him. Hitherto he had found that a ten per cent. margin was much more than sufficient

to hold each of his ventures, guided as he was by the Jar's occult divination. He had recently bought several thousand shares of Western Union and Lackawanna with only that slight protection, and the paper which he had searched nervously for quotations and which had fallen from his trembling grasp at the first sight of the figures, had told him not only that his margin had been completely wiped out, but that his brokers having been unable to protect themselves had failed disastrously, that he was supposed to have fled from the city, and that he was stamped in the public prints as a swindler and a scoundrel.

Mr. Blodgett lost no time in getting back to town. On his arrival he hastened at once to his broker's office, and endeavored to mend matters as best he could. He explained the situation and then sought his influential friends to obtain loans sufficient to make another big venture, which he felt confident would soon put him on his feet again, his faith in the Wizard's Jar being still unshaken. His friends, however, his prospective father-in-law included, who, a fortnight ago, would have loaned him any amount, were now very wary, and made all manner of excuses, so that Mr. Blodgett found he would have to depend entirely upon his own resources. He had still about ten thousand dollars in bank, and with this he determined to make a grand *coup*.

He rushed back to his hotel, and hurried to his room to interview the Wizard's Jar, which, since his removal into his present luxurious quarters, he kept upon a plush-covered pedestal in his richly-furnished drawing-room.

Opening the door, a scene of desolation met his gaze and caused his high hopes to drop as a plummet. An oil painting had fallen from the wall and overturned the pedestal. Upon the Smyrna rug on which it had rested, lay shattered into ten thousand fragments, the remains of the Wizard's Jar.

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